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CHRISTIAN **COURIER**

December 15, 2003

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**In him was life, and that
life was the light ... p.16**

The little white card ... p.12

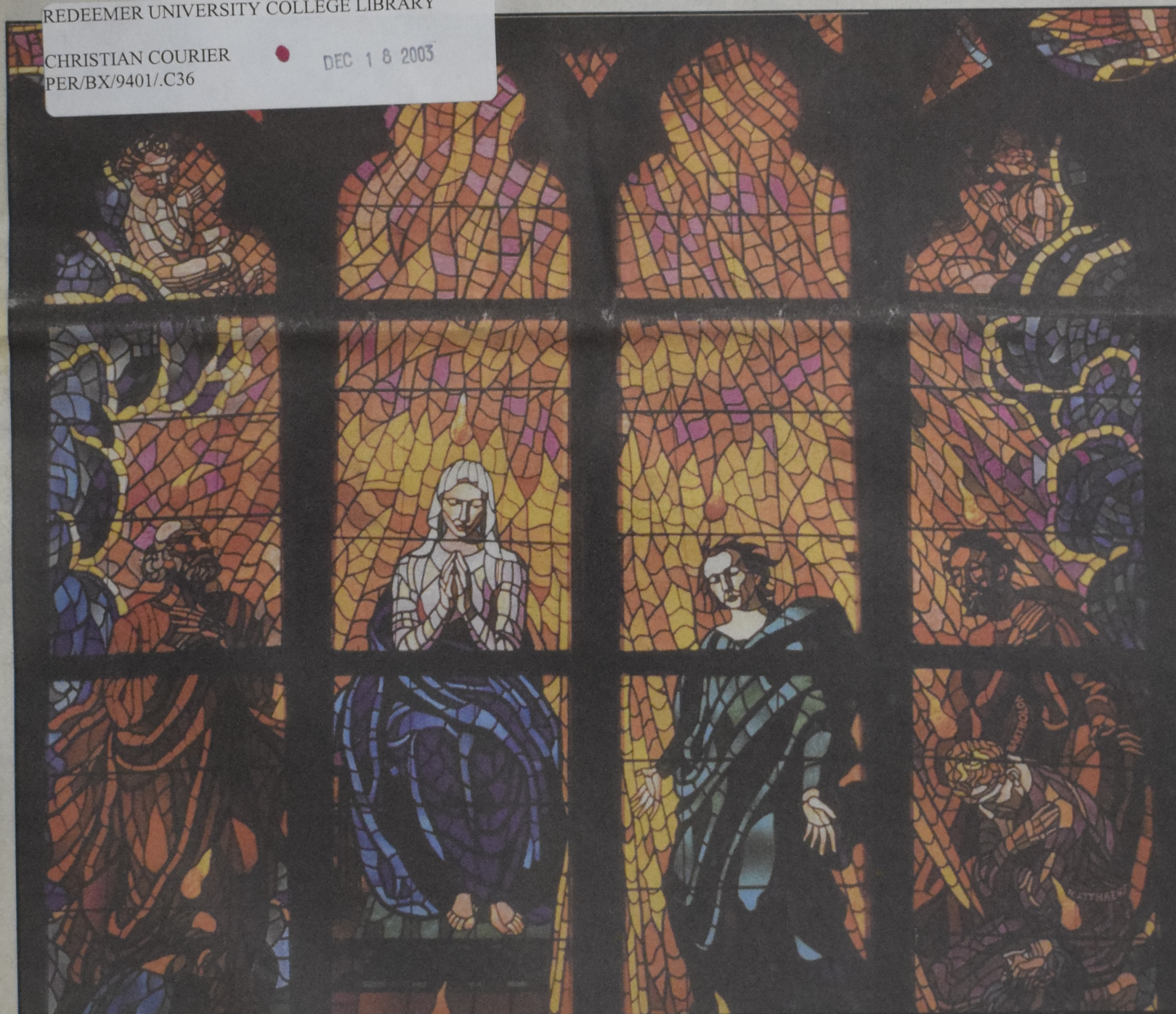


59th year of publication

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"The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world."

Christmas Greetings



Christian Courier staff: Ineke Medcalf, Kim Yungblut, Rose der Nederlanden, and Harry der Nederlanden. Kim works part-time helping with the mailing. Inset: Nathan Medcalf, who helps with the layout and proofing of the paper.

A large part of this special issue is our Christmas card to the readers of CC. We especially thank Ron de Boer, Sonya Vanderveen-Feddema, Berta Hosmar and Didy Prinzen for sharing their story-writing talents to stimulate our imaginations this Christmas season, Sophie Ensing for sharing her memories, and Walt Brouwer and Lisa Petsche for their practical advice. As the celebration of the birth of the Son of God, the fulfilment in a wholly unexpected, startling way of the desire of the ages, Christmas has always inspired marvelous music, paintings, drawings, etchings, sculpture, poetry and stories.

In the center pages we have collected a sampling of paintings and poetry from across the centuries. Several of the poems were taken from the excellent collection of poems edited by Merle Meeter, *The Country of the Risen King*. It is out of print, but if you come across a used copy, grab it for your church library. It also includes some powerful Easter poems.

Christian Courier

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and the world; express opinions infused by Scripture and
rooted in a Reformed perspective;
provide contact for the Christian community.*

EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Editor: Harry der Nederlanden editor@christiancourier.ca;
Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden
subscriptions@christiancourier.ca;
Accounts/Advertising Manager: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer
accounts@christiancourier.ca

REGIONAL REPORTERS

Jeff Hoogendoorn, Victoria; Jacky Huberts, Langley, B.C.;
James Kwantes, Red Deer, Alta.; Stephen VanHelden, Calgary;
Gordon Legge, Calgary; Jessie Schut, Edmonton;
Valerie Walker, Halifax; Robert VanderVennen, Toronto;
Margaret Dinsdale, Toronto.

EDITORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Doug Roorda, Wendy Saunders,
Erick Schuringa, Nelly Westerhoff, Bert Witvoet

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I tried to follow a theme in my selection of the poems and pictures, as you will notice from the verses across the top of the page – the coming of light into a world mired in darkness.

True, most of us are not mired. We have heard the good news since we were kids, and the light and joy that flows from knowing that the darkness has been overcome has been a golden thread even in bad times. Even those of us who are old and sick and suffering realize that we live privileged lives here in the West.

But we are part of a body of Christ that spans the globe, and those of us who have been reading the news about the persecuted church in many parts of the world know that the past half century has seen more Christian martyrs than all the preceding ages. The church of Christ of which we are part knows unprecedented depths of darkness, and it lives out of a deep longing for the advent of him who has come to dispel the darkness, who comes with healing in his wings, who will establish a kingdom filled with the radiance of his glory.

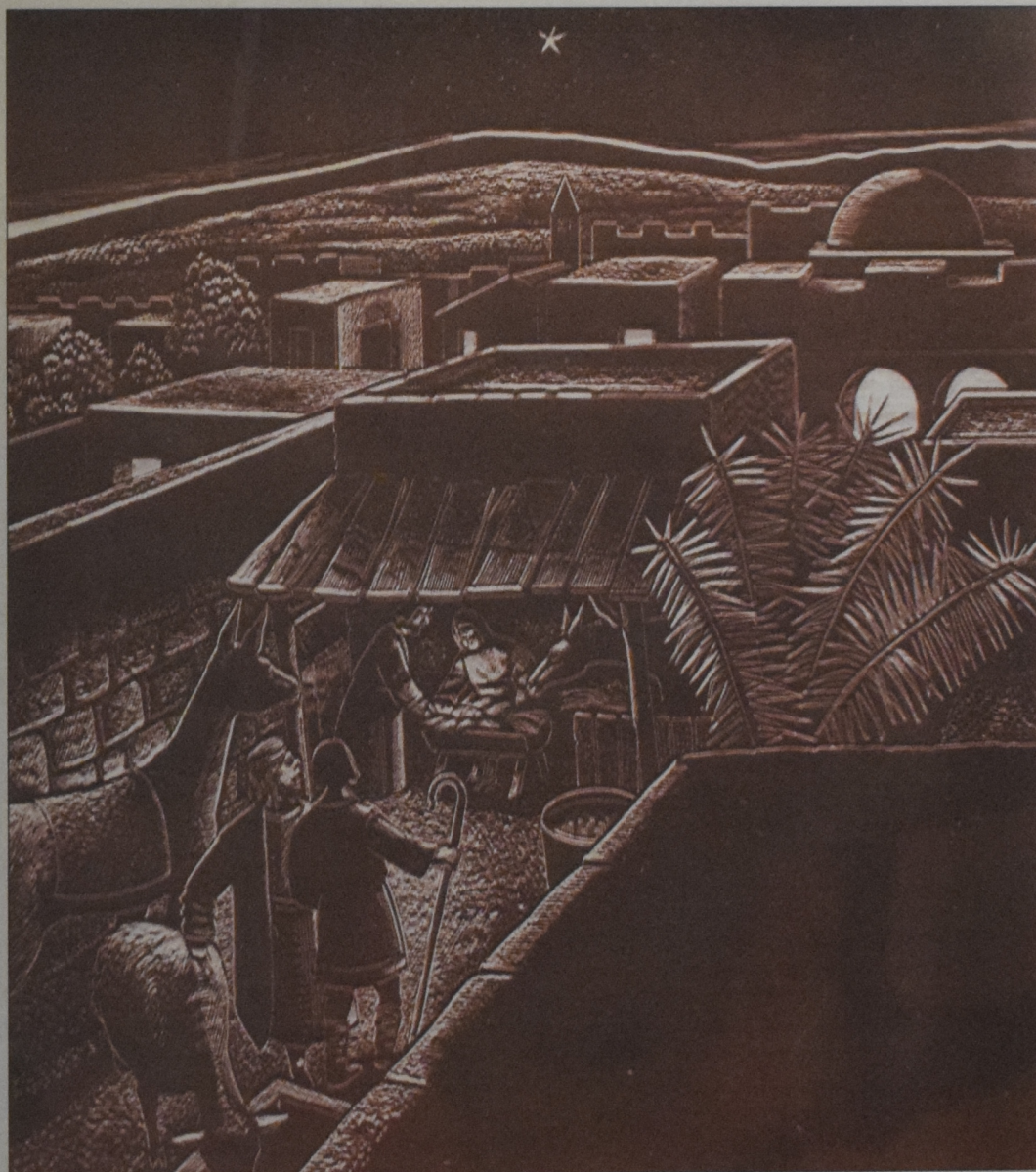
At the center of the classical Christmas scene is the act of God's self-humbling. He comes as a helpless child, born

in a barn, lying in a manger far from the centers of power and pomp. Gathered around are Joseph and Mary, simple folk, shepherds – part of the working poor – and the magi – seekers from far outside the borders of the chosen people. And the Christmas story culminates in Mary and Joseph becoming refugees, fleeing to distant Egypt.

It is good that in this season of the year we also look well beyond the cozy family circle and think of ways to share our wealth, for example, through the work of Citizens for Public Justice in their advocacy for the poor and the work of agencies like the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee. It's a way of joining in the song Mary sang at the Savior's birth – that God has exalted the lowly and filled the hungry with good things. All such agencies are feeling a financial pinch this year, and our gift buying and celebration can be extended to dispel darkness and bring hope in faraway places.

Then we can echo once again that angel choir: "Joy to the world! The Lord is come!"

May you have a joyous Christmas – from the staff of Christian Courier – Harry, Ineke, Kim, Nathan and Rose.



By Walter Wangerin, Jr. taken from Christianity Today, Dec. 13, 1993 issue

Editorial

The Christmas carnival

Harry der Nederlanden

Bah, humbug! Let the pagans have the season. Christmas is so swamped with folderol, consumerism and busyness that have nothing to do with the celebration of the incarnation, it is beyond redemption. So argue more than a few Christian leaders. Even some 50 years ago C.S. Lewis contrasted Eksmas and Christmas, the pagan and the Christian celebration as incompatible.

Most of us will have some sympathy for such sentiments after elbowing our way through the local mall the month before Christmas and driving through streets lined with illuminated reindeer, snowmen, elves, Santas and other cutesy displays designed to arouse our sentimentality. It is the season of Trish Romance scenes that evoke nostalgia for an era that never was – a time when people lived in spacious Victorian homes with large verandas and huge living rooms that could accommodate ten-foot pine trees and a generous fireplace, a time when family members arrived in horse-drawn sleighs laden with gifts and it was always snowing at Christmas, a time when children were not demanding but innocent and wide-eyed with awe. Christmas is a fantasy of twinkling lights, sweet carols, treats, big meals, family gatherings, special programs, choirs, gift-giving and high excitement and expectation.

Wouldn't it be better to divest the Christian holy day of all those sentimental accretions and trappings? Better we should fast, give to the poor and meditate on the extreme inequality and injustice that prevails in this world.

On the other hand, what is the deep source from which all this admittedly materialistic and consumerist display flows? Why are skeptical moderns nevertheless drawn like moths to these flickering lights and sugary dreams of goodwill to all? Isn't it because in spite of itself the pagan rituals are imbued with the deep longing, the religious desire for the light that brings reconciliation and joy and peace in a world racked with suffering and hatred and war?

Even though there is a tension between them, Eksmas and Christmas do not exist side by side wholly unrelated. All that frenzied materialism and dizzying effort to create a moment of dazzle and joy and fellowship here and now in the dead of winter shouldn't be rejected in the name of a pure spirituality. Christianity is materialistic.

Christmas is, among other things, an affirmation and redemption of the goodness of our material, bodily

existence. It is a declaration that God does not demand that we shuck off this flesh in order to please him. God takes on our flesh and makes it glow with perfection.

Here, in the middle of the hurly-burly of soldiers and officials lining up people to register them on the tax rolls, in this world where people are reduced to ciphers by the decrees of a godlike Caesar who rules from distant Rome, the skies open and angels begin a busy traffic between heaven and earth.

For hundreds of years the skies above Israel have been dark and still. The Jews have heard of Yahweh only from second-hand reports read periodically from the scrolls, but there have been no angel visitations and no miraculous rescues for a long, long time. It is Rome that rules the world now. Like everyone else in Israel, Joseph and Mary must do what the Roman occupiers tell them to do. They are part of a defeated, subject people.

Just as Isaac was born well after Abraham and Sarah had about given up hope of ever having a son who is flesh of their flesh, so it is with Israel. The darkness had almost extinguished that spark of hope kindled by the extravagant promises made in the name of Yahweh by the prophets.

And suddenly the skies overhead become porous; stars flare up to become angels; the night sky becomes a conflagration of angels making whoopee overhead and singing at the top of their lungs about the most unlikely things imaginable.

A world of myth, magic and fairytale erupts into a world ruled by bureaucrats and soldiers. It's a miracle unlike any other. It's miracle piled upon miracle. It is not just gullible, sentimental folk who have cluttered the birth of Christ with marvelous stories that strike sparks from the imagination and that set musicians and artists working feverishly to express something of their wonderment.

Angels pop up everywhere. First to an elderly couple and then to an ordinary Jewish girl who just wants to get married to a good man and raise children in the bucolic little town of Nazareth. Her fiancée, too, gets some coaching from an angel, not once but twice.

And then the big event takes place in the most unlikely of all places – in a shed built to shelter animals. Then we are asked to imagine an explosion of heavenly hosts in the fields near Bethlehem, summoning a raggedy bunch of shepherds as witnesses to the most awesome event in human history. Another exotic group of witnesses are summoned from far beyond the borders of the promised land by a star.

Astrologers from a pagan nation, it seems, are more attuned to the acts of Yahweh than the people God created for just this purpose – to give birth to the light of the world, "the true Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world."

The world is turned upside down. The people who live and work in palaces and temples and who wear fancy clothes are by-passed. This is even better than all those lost princess and those prince-and-the-pauper stories children love. In fact, it is their source.

It is a story too marvelous just for words. It demands music and lights and bells and dramatizations and people hurrying and scurrying back and forth talking to one another.

The magi get turned into mythical, allegorical figures, representing Isaiah's kings coming from afar to bring their

wealth to Israel, or the various nations and races of the world which will hear the gospel after Pentecost. The animals in the stable of Bethlehem develop fantastic histories of their own, appropriately extending the good news to all the creatures of the earth, not just us humans. As in the story of Balaam, the lowly ass suddenly gets to play a central role in the history of salvation. It is all wonderfully backward and extravagant at the same time.

No, it isn't just the unspiritual and those who are suckers for sentiment who clutter up the celebration of the Word made flesh with all that marvelous stuff that appeals to our senses and our imaginations. It is the Bible itself, it is God who turned Christmas into a circus, a carnival of light and joy. The new life, the new world that's a-coming looks good, tastes good, smells good.

Awake, glad heart! Get up and sing;
It is the birthday of thy King.
Awake! awake!
The sun doth shake
Light from his locks, and all the way
Breathing perfumes, doth spice the day.

Awake, awake! Hark, how the wood rings,
Winds whisper, and the busy springs
A consort make.
Awake! awake!
Man is their high priest and should rise
To offer up the sacrifice.

I would I were some bird or star
Fluttering in woods or lifted far
Above this inn
And road of sin!
Then either star or bird should be
Shining or singing still to Thee.

From *Christ's Nativity*
by Henry Vaughan

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NOTE: Picture, front page - Stained glass of Saint Vitus Cathedral in Prague.

Christmas Greetings

Ecumenical greetings

As a symbol of the global and ecumenical nature of the church of Christ, we include here Christmas greetings from two church leaders who speak for huge communions of Christians from non-Reformed traditions. The Lutheran World Fellowship embraces about 62 million people and the Anglican Communion about 75 million. Elsewhere in this issue you will also find a meditation written by Pope John Paul II, who speaks for and to over 1 billion Catholic believers.

Christmas message from the President of the Lutheran World Federation

What fills the earth this Christmas season? Is it only the deafening sounds of war? Do we all hold our breath, dreading what violence each day might bring? For far too many the prevailing image this Christmas is not birth, but death.

The movement of humanity is more often those fleeing suffering rather than "the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (Isaiah 52:7).

Where do we look to find signs of hope? Some suggest it is to an expanding global economy. Yet for every one who benefits, how many others lack daily bread, adequate shelter and available health care? Putting confidence in military might and terrorist acts as the only path to peace seems to be the absurd and dominating logic of our day. The very creation is at risk because of humanity's sinful ways.

Yet, there is good news. God has not forsaken God's creation nor forgotten God's promises. "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

The angels announced it. The shepherds returned home glorifying and praising God for it. Yes, the whole creation is full of grace and truth. God in Jesus Christ dwells among us

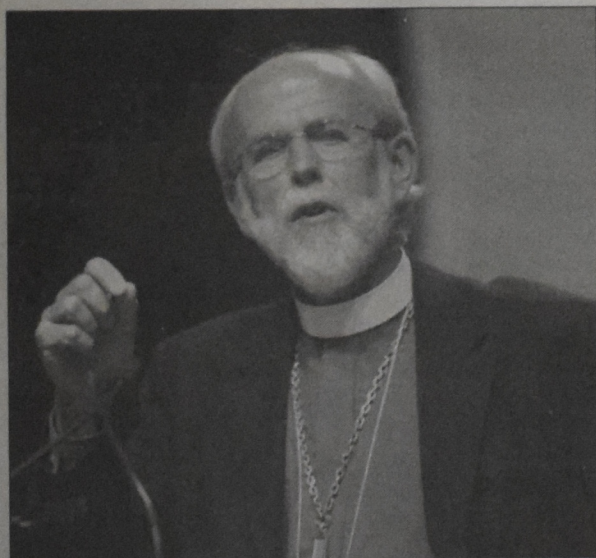
(Emmanuel). God is not over-powering us, but entering into our humanity, taking on the suffering of the world.

Such is the depth of God's mercy and the wonder of God's love. Jesus the Christ, crucified and risen, is God's power made perfect in weakness.

Claimed by God's grace, marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are sent into the world God loves so. There we proclaim peace on earth. There we work for justice. There we bear witness in word and deed to the fullness of God's grace and truth.

May we be renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit as we join with others for the healing of the world. May the wonder of God's grace incarnate in Jesus the Christ fill you with hope.

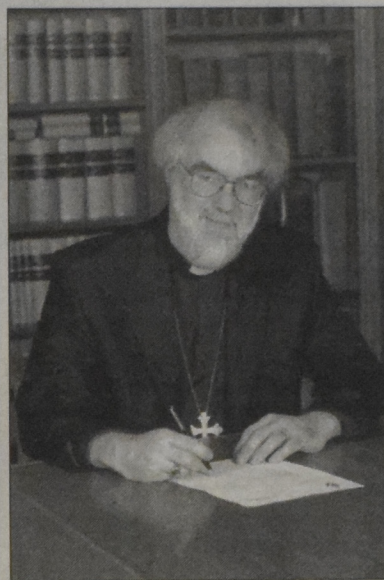
In God's grace,
Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson
President, The Lutheran World Federation



Bishop Mark S. Hanson President, The Lutheran World Federation

(The LWF is a global communion of Christian churches in the Lutheran tradition. Founded in 1947 in Lund (Sweden), the LWF now has 136 member churches in 76 countries representing over 61.7 million of the 65.4 million Lutherans worldwide. The LWF acts on behalf of its member churches in areas of common interest such as ecumenical and inter-faith relations, theology, humanitarian assistance, human rights, communication, and the various aspects of mission and development work. Its secretariat is located in Geneva, Switzerland.)

Christmas message from the Archbishop of Canterbury



Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams

The carols we sing and the prayers we say around Christmas carry two important messages which at first sight look a bit contradictory. Jesus is described as "the desire of all nations," picking up the words of Haggai 2.7; he is what everyone has been waiting for, the one that everybody on earth longs to meet. All human life finds its centre and its goal in Jesus.

And then we remember that there was "no room in the inn," and we sing carols about how "the busy world" had no space for Christ, and how, from the very beginning, the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head. No one wants to meet him; he is on the edge, not at the centre.

This is not a sign of confusion on the part of Christians. If Jesus is truly divine as well as truly human, then we always have to face the fact that he will not fit into our world tidily – even when we want him to.

God's purposes for the world are likely to be mysterious to our small minds; and in order to go along with those purposes, we shall have to change in ways that can frighten and panic us. No wonder that we push Jesus to the edge and try to avoid the implication of what he says and does.

Yet we can't get away. God has made us in such a way that we only become really human when we are in harmony with his life and love. His will, his presence, his personal being is indeed what we most deeply want. It's as if we

have to make a very long journey to find these deep places in ourselves, a journey for which we need courage and patience.

So what looks like the edge is really the centre. Jesus is both a frightening stranger and the one who speaks to us with more intimacy and immediacy than any other being. Our Christmas stories and songs are about how long it takes to find ourselves, the selves God made.

T. S. Eliot's poem about the journey of the magi imagines the three wise men asking "Were we led all that way for birth or death?" (see p.17) And the answer is "both"; so much of what we think we want and what we think will help us or make us safe has to die; and what comes to birth is the self God wants, the self that begins to look like Jesus, the true image of God in humanity.

We're living through a time of great uncertainty and disturbance. There is no quick solution to the disputes that divide us, and we are all, surely, grieved at how these disputes take us away from the task of sharing the good news.

But at Christmas we are reminded of truths that should unsettle everyone in the Church – not just "liberals" or "conservatives." We are all brought before the same Christ and told that he is both the one we most need and long for and the one we shall find most strange and troubling. We are all urged to begin again the long journey into our hearts to find the true centre.

We shan't emerge from that journey with better arguments with which to defeat opponents or better schemes for saving the Church. We emerge with a greater fear and wonder – like those who in the gospel stories first met the newborn child; and we turn to get on with the hard business of living in a divided and imperfect church with just a little more awareness of the overwhelming mystery with which we deal and the searching questions it puts to each one of us.

Before becoming preoccupied with our neighbor's failings, we must, in the presence of the Christ child, look first to our own birth and death; to where we see the centre and the edge; to how we find God's centre, not just the centre of our own concerns and anxieties.

The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid...."

The shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see."

News

The persecuted church around the world

The following overview of the persecuted church worldwide was sent to us by Alan Doerksen, now with Christian Aid Mission, an agency that raises support for indigenous missions around the globe.

North Korea

Despite a highly repressive regime, the number of Christians in North Korea is growing. Believers are sent to labor camps and treated worse than animals behind electric fences. Millions of North Koreans have died of starvation, and many seeking escape to China are returned to near-certain death if they are discovered. Even so, the number of believers in North Korea is estimated to be around 400,000.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia does not allow a Christian church of any kind. One cannot legally carry a Bible into the country, and even though private worship in the homes of Christian foreigners is allegedly permitted, in actual practice the religion police hunt down and invade Christian home meetings of foreigners and throw the leaders in jail, where they are beaten, barely survive in miserable conditions, and hopefully are eventually deported.

Vietnam

Christians in this country are arrested, tortured, and even executed as "traitors" of the country, since Communist authorities there identify Christianity with the USA, their enemy. Some have been run out of their villages and their homes set on fire. Some are tortured with electric shocks and mocked as fools. Others are imprisoned and treated as "tailless animals." Authorities have closed 400 churches in one rural province alone. A few churches operate openly in areas visible to foreign visitors.

Laos

Laos authorities pretty much follow the lead of their Vietnamese neighbors. Their goal is to have a "Christianless society." So some local officials have burned homes of believers or encouraged villagers to throw rocks at Christians and publicly mock them. Christians at times are barred from using village water, food sources,

medical facilities, and some have had their electricity cut off.

Pakistan

Being a Christian in Islamic Pakistan has always been a life-threatening, since Christians can

magazine can be cause for imprisonment.

China

While China struggles to maintain its Communist stance in the midst of progressive prosperity,

to get, Christians are barred from receiving government food subsidies given to Buddhists. In addition, the army and area militias make Christian villagers serve as porters and do road work without pay.

the ideological pattern that all citizens must comply with. Evangelical groups are finding it almost impossible to register and function openly, while the Orthodox Church is given favorable status.

Uganda

Though Uganda is not a persecuting country and the government encourages Christian churches, the predominantly Christian people of Northern Uganda have suffered severely for many years at the hands of the blasphemous terrorist cult militia, the Lord's Resistance Army, headed by feared spirit medium, Joseph Kony. They especially target Christians, kill clergy, kidnap and rape children, and hack people to death. Pray that this cult leader will be captured and this demonic movement stopped.

Help for the suffering

Christian Aid is sending gifts to help meet the needs of suffering believers as well as to train and support workers in many of these areas. For more details, check out the Christian Aid website: www.christianaid.ca.



Nigeria

Nigeria, a base for missions for much of sub-Saharan Africa, is under attack. Since Olusegun Obasanjo, a Christian, was elected president in 1999, Muslims have felt threatened and reacted with the imposition of Sharia law in 12 northern states and have closed most Christian schools and churches in Kano state. Their goal is to make Nigeria an Islamic country.

Belarus

Evangelical believers in post-Soviet Belarus are under increasing oppression. The government is imposing old Soviet-style restrictions and is attempting to set

be accused by any angry Muslim and put in jail for years or even killed on the basis of the country's infamous anti-blasphemy laws. The country hosts a strong contingent of Islamic radicals and, since the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, attacks against Christians and churches have intensified. Christian institutions have been bombed and churches invaded with machine-gun fire. Even young Christian girls have been attacked and raped in retaliation for the US actions. A favorite action is to throw acid in the face of any young Christian woman who refuses the overtures of a Muslim male.

Other "-stan" Lands

Two countries of Central Asia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, have true freedom of religion with 1,600 evangelical churches and 10 Bible colleges. Two other countries, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, impose more restrictions. There, churches must have 100 members to register or face closure, harassment and arrest. One state in Uzbekistan has banned Protestants from being schoolteachers. The leader of Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Niyazov, considers himself a Lenin-style ideologue and demands uncompromised devotion. Though some Orthodox churches are permitted, evangelical believers are not tolerated. They are refused registration, their meetings raided, believers and leaders jailed. Just having a Bible or evangelical

Christians and churches are either persecuted or admired. While they are held up as models in a few places, for the most part house churches are still considered a threat to the Party, and house church leaders are attacked, imprisoned and beaten. Yet, prayers of Christians and public pressure seem to help keep the persecution from getting out of hand. In the midst of it all, Chinese continue to come to Christ in record numbers.

Sudan

For the past 20 years, Sudan has been going through a civil war that has been mainly between the Arab Islamic government in the North, that wants to rule the entire populace by Islamic law, and the "black" African Christian and animist South. The conflict, together with famines, has killed two million people and displaced four million, mostly Christians. Villagers in the South are attacked, captured, maimed, murdered, or made into menial labour or sex slaves.

Myanmar (Burma)

At least 85% of Myanmar's 45 million population are Buddhists; Christians number approximately 3.7 million. Believers in Myanmar face hardship on several fronts. They suffer persecution from Buddhist priests, and social persecution from Buddhist villagers. With the country going through economic hardship and food hard

Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools takes government to court

The Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools went to court late November to prevent the Liberal government from passing a bill that eliminates the controversial private-school tax credit.

The Alliance argued that canceling the tax credit, which lets parents recoup 20% of school tuition, violates an existing law that prevents unplanned tax hikes.

It sought a court-ordered injunction that would stop the government from debating the Fiscal Responsibility Act, introduced by Dalton McGuinty's government, which includes a cancellation of the tax credit for private schools. The OACS took the position that there is a significant difference between the cancellation of proposed tax cuts and the claw back of a tax policy that has already been in effect for almost three years.

The lawsuit argued that a province-wide referendum must be held before the bill could be introduced. The bill could become law before the legislature breaks for Christmas. McGuinty said canceling the tax credit as well as stopping a credit for senior citizens who pay education taxes will save the government about \$950-million each year that can be spent on public education.

The court, however, denied the temporary injunction. The judge, Justice Ian Nordheimer, acknowledged that there may well be a conflict between the government's tax plans and legislation, but ruled that the issue will have to be resolved in the legislature.

Adrian Guldmond, Director of the OACS said, "It is unfair for government to target an identifiable group as the only persons who will be paying more taxes, and on a broader plane, this will be a deliberate return to the state-sponsored discrimination decreed by the United Nations prior to the introduction of the tax credit."

News



Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

A messianic psalm

For two millennia the Christian tradition has found references to the coming of Jesus Christ in the biblical Psalter. These have found their way into the church's liturgy, particularly during the seasons of Advent and Christmas. Here is my own versification of one of these: Psalm 72, as set to the proper Genevan melody:

God, give your righteousness to the king,
your justice to his son,
that he may rightly judge your people
and each afflicted one.
Let mountains echo with the message
of righteousness and peace,
for he defends the poor and needy
and makes oppression cease.

Long as the sun and moon shall endure,
from age to age he lives;
like welcome rain upon the dry land,
prosperity he gives.
Until the moon from heaven vanish
shall peace and justice reign.
From sea to sea extends his kingdom,
strong shall his rule remain.

Ungodly nations fall at his feet,
his foes before him bow.
Tribute from Tarshish and the islands
into his presence flow.
The kings of Sheba and of Seba
bear precious gifts in hand.
All earthly monarchs do him homage
and serve at his command.

When needy people call upon him,
their cause he will defend.
He pities all the weak and helpless,
the poor he will befriend.
He sets them free from all oppression,
their lives are in his care.
May Sheba's gold be offered to him;
"Long live!" be every prayer.

May bounteous grain envelop the land,
even the mountain tops;
let sheaves be numberless as the grass,
like Leb'non's fruitful crops.
O may his name live on for ever,
long lasting as the sun.
For every people shall find blessing
through him, the kingly one.

Praise to the Lord, the God of Israel;
wonders he works alone.
Praised be his glorious name for ever;
his name through earth be known.



May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ uphold us as we celebrate his nativity.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of *Political Visions and Illusions* (InterVarsity Press). His musical arrangement for this psalm can be found at: <http://www.redeemer.on.ca/academics/polisci/psalm65.mid>.

Evangelical theological society debates God's foreknowledge

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Is it possible to hold to the inerrancy of the Bible while also believing that God's knowledge of the future is limited?

That question was at the heart of a debate within the Evangelical Theological Society over what should and should not be permitted within the 54-year-old organization. Several hundred ETS members met in Atlanta Nov. 19-21 and one of their duties was to decide whether to expel two of its members — McMaster Divinity College's Clark Pinnock and Huntingdon College's John Sanders — who embrace a theological view called "open theism."

Open theists claim that God does not know the future decisions of humans because those choices have yet to be made. In other words, they say, there is nothing to know. Critics call their views heresy.

Two years ago the society passed by a vote of 253-66 a non-binding resolution opposing open theism.

ETS membership requirements are minimal: In addition to a small yearly fee, members must agree with a short two-sentence doctrinal statement, which simply affirms biblical inerrancy and the doctrine of the Trinity.

For Pinnock and Sanders to be expelled, critics had to prove that open theism is incompatible with inerrancy. Other facets of open theism were not at issue in the ETS debate.

Both sides claimed that the future of the body was in danger and that a split could occur.

In the months leading up to the meeting the two sides made their cases in papers posted on the ETS website (www.etsjets.org). Roger Nicole, one of the founding members of ETS, brought the initial charges last year and has since posted papers on the website explaining his position. Pinnock and Sanders posted responses. Other members of the society — including past presidents — also voiced their opinion.

Nicole's charges focused on two books — Pinnock's *Most Moved Mover* and Sanders' *The God Who Risks* — that detail the two authors' beliefs. Those who were for their removal argued that a belief in open theism conflicts with a belief in an inerrant Bible.

But Pinnock's and Sanders' supporters held that while they may disagree with open theism, such views fall within the society's doctrinal boundaries and should be allowed.

"The doctrinal basis of the Evangelical Theological Society is limited," wrote Haddon Robinson of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. "That serves the Society well. ETS is not a church; it is not a seminary. It is a Society for evangelical scholars with widely divergent views to come together to hear one another out."

"... Voting people out of the membership with whom we disagree not only works against a purpose for which the Society exists, but, ultimately, it could destroy ETS completely."

Another past president, Reformed Theological Seminary's Bruce Waltke, has sided with Pinnock and Sanders, saying that while he believes their views are heretical, they must be allowed to stay and the society "must be allowed to breathe."

But others maintained that one cannot believe in both inerrancy and open theism. Southeastern Seminary's Bush pointed to the ETS doctrinal statement, which says in part that the "Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs."

Open theism conflicts with that statement in two areas, Bush argued.

First, open theists "do not believe that God can speak inerrantly about the actual future," Bush argued, because they believe that the "future is truly and fully open."

Such a belief means that the Bible cannot be inerrant, Bush argued. "[The Bible] might be in-

errant if God in fact got it right, but we could not know it is always right even if we know it is an authentic word of God, because God simply does not and cannot know everything about the actual future."

Secondly, Bush wrote, open theists "believe that God can change his mind in such a way that something he has purposed and revealed in Scripture might be significantly changed by God's own decision." Thus, "God is not utterly trustworthy; he might reveal his will to us but then change his mind in such a way that what he previously revealed would prove to be wrong or false."

The executive committee put a recommendation before the members that would have dismissed Sanders but upheld the membership of Pinnock. The latter offered to change a controversial passage in his book. Instead of saying that God sometimes does not fulfill his prophecies, he revised it to say that God sometimes fulfills them in new and unexpected ways.

Some members of the executive committee said that, although they found Sanders' views unacceptable, not all ETS members agree on what inerrancy means.

When the matter finally came up for a vote, neither Pinnock nor Sanders were expelled. Members were quick to stress that this in no way meant they embraced the teachings of the two theologians but simply that the teachings may not be incompatible with a belief in biblical inerrancy. Many others were concerned that the ETS continue as a society in which divergent views can be openly discussed. [This article is based on a report by Michael Foust of Baptist Press supplemented by information from several other sources.]

Orthodox look forward to re-opening seminary in Turkey

Warsaw, 19 November (ENI)—The Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople has welcomed signs that the Turkish government will allow the re-opening of the country's only Orthodox seminary, more than three decades after its forced closure.

"Although nothing is certain yet, we believe we'll obtain permission during 2004 to begin work [at the seminary] again," Dositeos Anagnostopoulos, spokesperson for the Istanbul-based Patriarchate, said.

The Orthodox Church's presence in Istanbul dates back to the days of Byzantium, when the city, then known as Constantinople, was a hugely influential center of Christian culture.

See story Nov 3 issue

Reflections

Christmas outdoors

Vern Gleddie

Marti once turned down an offer to accompany his father on a flight to New York between Christmas and the New Year. It was 1949 and no one he knew had been in an airplane let alone flying so far. It wasn't that he didn't want to go. There was merely nothing he would rather do than stay home on the ranch and care for cattle and sheep.

The 12-year-old relished working the whole day outside and the more stormy the weather the better. There were others working on the ranch, but Marti wrangled permission from his dad to have full responsibility for the hospital bunch of sheep during the holidays in addition to helping out with other chores. The hospital sheep were

the lame and ill culled from the main flock.

Marti also enjoyed the seasonal festivities. He, like any other, eagerly anticipated the various family gatherings set for the holidays, playing hockey with cousins on the pond, opening gifts and so on. But the excitement associated with any of those events ended with the event. The following day was always a let-down. Looking after ranch animals, however, was continually interesting, especially in winter with its potential challenges of extreme cold and blowing snow.

Outdoors was the place for Marti. Even when confined indoors with the measles or chickenpox, cabin fever was always the more painful. Four walls brought the horizon in uncomfortably close. The

earliest recollections of his young life were of being captivated by prairie skies, rolling hills, pungent sage, and horses, sheep and cattle ranging over miles of grassland. From his tender years on he never had reason to consider living anywhere else. He was where he belonged.

During the mid-winter school holidays Christmas Eve held special significance for the lad. He didn't think a lot about that. As ranch life was a natural fit for Marti so also entering the Christmas season was like slipping on a glove. Impressed by the first advent's humble agricultural environment, Marti took it upon himself to make sure the animals in his care got extra feed and bedding on that special night.

Marti knew from his father's example that caring husbandry was the right thing for ranch animals. Nevertheless, his knowledge of the Christmas story was behind his extra kindness to the animals. The fact that Jesus entered the world in a stable lent great significance to the work of a young ranch hand. There was nothing earthier than a stable; no one more down to earth than shepherds. It was as though Jesus had bent down low to show everyone on earth that everything he made is important to him.

The Christmas story made a connection between heaven and earth for Marti. But not until he was over 30 did a much fuller significance of that connection dawn on him. Then the redemption factor began to envelope the young

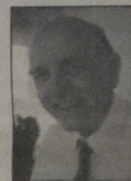
man's life rather than remain a novel part of it. In a way it became like Christmas all year round to realize that the Creator had arranged for the renewal of all things and that Marti could be a part of that activity.

Growing up and then owning a ranch wasn't all the fun and thrill Marti thought it would be. Sometimes it was downright discouraging coping with all the difficulties, including weather. The magic of Christmas Eve paled somewhat alongside the pain that came with responsibility. Yet there was deep fulfillment in keeping a divine appointment.

Over a lifetime Marti never did visit New York. He traveled to other places in the world, but it was always important and most satisfying to come home and get to work again — outdoors.



Vern Gleddie has a sheep ranch in near Edmonton, AB



Christmas goes south

I heard of a student who was born on Christmas day, and yet her birthday came every summer. Think about that....

Right. She lived south of the equator. Come to think of it, most of the Christians in the world celebrate Christmas without snow.

We as Christians really need to reconfigure our thinking when it comes to our place in this world. Most maps made when I was a kid always had North America at the centre of the map. But North America is not the centre of the world for most people. It is not even on the "top half" of the earth, if you think about it. "Up" and "down" in our galaxy are all a matter of perception.

In the same way we need to de-center ourselves in terms of the global Christian movement. Says Gary Babcock, a theology professor at the University of Western Ontario: "Global Christianity is today a Southern religion more than it is a Western one, and as such, it is as much characterized by pov-

erty and by anti-Western sentiment as are parts of the Islamic world." For many Christians in the world, we in the West may appear more like the source of the world's problems than a role model to imitate.

The Supernatural South

The Christian population of North America is estimated at 260 million. Compare that with the estimates of 313 million in Asia, 360 million in Africa, and 480 million in Latin America. These latter populations have been referred to as the "Third Church" and have a theological agenda quite different from our own. Religious Studies professor Phillip Jenkins suggests that this "counter-reformation" to the liberalizing North is adamantly supernaturalist, neo-orthodox, and embracing a premodern worldview: "a vision of Jesus as the embodiment of divine power, who overcomes evil forces that inflict calamity and sickness upon the human race."

At the risk of generalizing, these

believers can be characterized as conservative, charismatic, apocalyptic, anti-intellectual and eager to submit to spiritual authority, whether it be a radical Protestant sect, a Pentecostal pastor, or strict Roman Catholicism. Prophecy, exorcisms, healings, and the combating of witchcraft are common practise in many places in Africa. With the exception of the latter, Jenkins says, "When a Northerner asks, in effect, where the Southern churches are getting such ideas, the answer is not hard to find: they are getting them from the Bible."

The situation is very tense. Poverty, competition with Islam, and this explosion of enthusiastic faith make for much instability. Global Anglicanism is on the brink of divide as the South is adamantly opposed to the gay-friendly agenda of the North. "Political leaders and diplomats should pay at least as much attention to religions and sectarian frontiers as they have to the location of oil

fields," warns Jenkins.

Humiliation of the North

"Africa is not all problems," a graduate student from Ghana insisted to me. "The Western media make you think that all is chaos, poverty, and AIDS, but that is not true. Africa is also a place of peace and beauty, too."

Calvin College Communication Studies professor Mark Fackler came to Brock recently and spoke of his research in Africa. One thing he emphasized was how different African culture was from [North] Western culture, including theology. He said West tends to understand the image of God in humanity in primarily individualistic terms: as our moral conscience, self-awareness, reflectivity, and as an indication of the inherent value of each person. African theology, however, locates this divine image our essential human relatedness. As the Trinity is communal, so is humanity.

In other words, your neighbors

are those to whom you are inherently bound, not someone to whom you relate by choice, contract, or only for mutual benefit. We are not fellow market players in Africa, but fellow creatures. "In Africa, no human life is a prop to another's happiness," said Fackler, "life is sacred." Africa's wars challenge this ideal, but the ideal remains. This radical communitarian notion may be a light for the West, which spirals deeper and deeper into unfettered individualism and rabid consumption.

The North is wandering deeper into its own humiliation as a Christian presence in the world. Christmas, intended as celebration of coming of the Messiah rather than as a shopping season, may be more of a Southern holy day. Even if it never snows.

Peter Schuurman is chaplain at Brock University



CAMPUS CULTURE

Peter Schuurman



Church

Australian Christians sued for criticizing witchcraft and Islam

In October two Christian pastors were taken to court for inciting hatred against Islam under controversial new hate legislation. In November a witch launched a lawsuit against an elected official who warned against occult activity.

The lawsuits have confirmed the fears of Christians in the state of Victoria, where the law was passed, that the state's Racial and Religious Tolerance Act would enable members of one religious group to take legal action against those of another who publicly criticize their beliefs.

Defending accusations of vilification in a special tribunal, writes Patrick Goodenough of CNSNews.com, can be costly. The case involving alleged slurs against Islam, which has run for more than a month and still is not finalized, already has cost the defendants well over \$70,000 in legal and other expenses, said a source close to the case.

If the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), which operates like a court, upholds a vilification complaint, it can order the payment of compensation of up to \$3,900 for individuals and \$19,800 for organizations.

Now a local Christian councilor, Rob Wilson, in a small city on the edge of Melbourne is preparing to defend himself in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal against complaints brought by a witch.

Wilson issued a statement in which he raised concerns that local Wiccans may have been seeking to plant someone on the council who was sympathetic to their cause, naming a former candidate for councilor who had revealed that she was a witch. He also urged a local grouping of church leaders to hold a special day of prayer against "the forces of evil."

The woman in question, Olivia Watts, said she sought "an apology and acknowledgment that I have the legal, moral, ethical, social right to follow an ancient and beautiful faith without being accused of evil."

Evil without a devil

One of Watts' key complaints is that Wilson associated Wiccan with Satanists. A pamphlet distributed in the city points out that "witches don't support the devil or even believe in the devil."

Spells cast by witches, it explains, are "a means of achieving a desired effect," not unlike prayer or meditation. They are not used to do harm, it claims.

Earlier the Islamic Council of Victoria entered a broad complaint that included not just the speakers and lecturers at a seminar about Islam but the entire meeting. The Islamic Council charged that the Christian ministry Catch the Fire "vilified Muslims" at a seminar on jihad on March 9, 2002. Two pastors from Pakistan reportedly lectured on the differences between Christianity and Islam, quoting information about Islam directly from the Koran and other recognized Islamic sources.

Voice of the Martyrs expressed concern that the two men will not be allowed to argue during their defense whether or not their statements were true, but only on whether or not they incited "hatred against, serious contempt for, or revulsion or severe ridicule" of Muslims.

Egyptian soldiers attack Christian center

The Egyptian Army has once again carried out a totally unprovoked attack on the Patmos Christian Center 30 km east of Cairo.

Just after midnight in the early hours of Tuesday November 18 an army dump truck was driven repeatedly into the perimeter wall surrounding the Patmos Christian Center, causing considerable damage.

This is the eighth attack on the center in the past six and a half years. Soldiers from the local army unit are seeking to destroy the wall supposedly because it does not conform to a new law which requires all buildings to be at least 100 meters from the Cairo-Suez road. The wall stands 50 meters from the road and was built ten years ago in full accordance with the law at the time.

Workers at the center point out that the local army barracks' own walls also stand 50 meters from the road and no attempt has been made to demolish these. Similarly many other buildings in the area are much closer to the road, including some 15 mosques which stand only 5-10 meters from the road. Likewise no attempts have been made to demolish any of these buildings.

Church leaders say that the Minister of Defence, who has been opposed to the center since 1997, ordered extreme and conservative Muslim officers from the local army unit to enforce the law on the Patmos Center. They believe the repeated attacks are a result of anti-Christian prejudice amongst Muslim officers rather than a simple disagreement over building regulations. On the other hand other government representatives, including the President's office and the Ministry of the Interior, have intervened positively in the past to protect the

center from intimidation and attacks by the military.

The Patmos Centre has been serving the local community in Egypt for fifteen years. The center is providing care and support for mentally and physically handicapped children and orphans, and is legally registered with the Egyptian authorities. It receives between 500-1000 visitors every day.

They believe the repeated attacks are a result of anti-Christian prejudice amongst Muslim officers rather than a simple disagreement over building regulations.

Meanwhile, in Al-Ayat, 30 miles to the south of Cairo, Muslims went on an anti-Christian rampage, burning and looting homes. Their complaint? Local Christians want to convert a small building they own into a church.

Shortly after Friday evening prayers on November 7 Muslims converged on the Christian quarter in the village of Girza. A mob

of more than 5000 Muslim extremists armed with sticks and containers of gas descended on the Coptic community. They burnt down four homes belonging to Christian families, looting and destroying six more. They also burnt down eight shops and torched the fields of eight further families. Eleven Christians were injured including an eighteen-month-old child; five were hospitalized.

As well as destroying Christian property, they also targeted the building in question. It was already being used as a place of worship, but it was destroyed so completely that even the foundations will have to be rebuilt.

There was also good news. All but one of the 22 Christian converts who were rounded up in October for crimes against Islam were released. The remaining prisoner is a woman who was charged with falsifying identity papers for other Christians, which is illegal if one is changing from Islam to some other religion. The authorities seem determined to make an example of her.

Saudi bombing targeted Lebanese Christians

Stefan J. Bos

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (ANS) — A massive suicide bombing of a residential compound in Riyadh that killed 17 people and injured over 120 others earlier in November was aimed at Lebanese Christians, a human rights watch-dog announced.

Barnabas Fund, which investigates the plight of Christians in mainly Muslim nations, said it has learned from a spokesman of the international terrorist network Al-Qaida that the bombers "were targeting mainly Americans and Christians."

"Months of surveillance had revealed (to Al-Qaida) that the inhabitants (of the al-Muhaya residential complex) were mainly Americans and Lebanese Christians. Both groups were deemed legitimate targets as enemies of Islam," the Barnabas Fund said.

"Of the seventeen people killed (among them five children), seven were Lebanese while among the 122 injured some 90 were Lebanese," the organization established.

Western lifestyle

It stressed the world media wrongly "focused its attention on the targeting of Arabs and Muslims living a western lifestyle, claiming that killing of Muslims would backfire and weaken support for the terrorist group. Some saw it as mainly aimed at destabilizing the Saudi Royal family."

Indigenous Christians living in Muslim lands have long been a target of radical Islamist violence, analysts say.

"Violence against Christians is also part of their strategy to destabilize the regime and expose its inability to ensure the safety of Christians under its protection. It is also part of a wider strategy to purge Christianity from the Arabian Peninsula and from the Muslim world as it is hoped that many will flee to the West because of the fear of further attacks," noted The Barnabas Fund.

Award winning journalist Stefan J. Bos is a special correspondent for ASSIST News Service.

Progressive Catholics petition bishops on celibacy

Kevin Eckstrom

RNS — Progressive Catholics delivered more than 7,000 petitions to Catholic bishops Oct. 11, asking for a church-wide discussion on priestly celibacy. Activists from FutureChurch and Call to Action presented the petitions to members of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"We'd rather have a discussion without a decision than a decision without a discussion," said Sally Orgren, a Call to Action organizer

from Buffalo, N.Y.

Church officials said the celibacy policy — which is mandatory for the vast majority of Catholic priests — is not up for discussion.

"Change has never come about because it's too hard or it can't be lived up to," said Coadjutor Bishop Joseph Galante of Dallas. Cleveland-based FutureChurch, which also supports the ordination of women, has compiled statistics showing a dramatic decline in the number of Catholic clergy. During

the 25-year reign of Pope John Paul II, activists say, the total Catholic population has grown by 40 percent while the number of priests has declined by 4 percent.

Sister Chris Schenk, director of FutureChurch, said celibacy per se is not the problem. "We don't want this to be interpreted as celibacy bad, marriage good. The problem is when celibacy becomes mandatory."

Church

China pursuing economic liberalism along with ideological rigidity

HONG KONG (Zenit.org) — The dynamism and increasing openness of China's economy is well known. Recognizing that more freedom leads to greater economic growth, China's rulers have been loosening their controls on economic activity. But when it comes to other freedoms, particularly religious liberty, the rulers continue to take a hard-line approach.

According to the U.S.-based Cardinal Kung Foundation, every one of the underground Catholic Church bishops is either in jail, under house arrest, under strict surveillance, or in hiding. Numerous priests and seminarians have also been arrested in recent years.

Repression by Chinese authorities has intensified in recent months. On July 7, Reuters reported that five members of the underground Catholic clergy were arrested in northern China while trying to visit a priest recently released from a labor camp.

A more widespread campaign was detailed in a June 29 article by the Spanish daily *El Mundo*. The newspaper reported that in Wenzhou, on China's eastern coast, authorities declared that they had identified 4,800 centers dedicated to promoting "feudal superstition." All the Christian churches were marked with signs in red paint, earmarking them for destruction. Authorities proclaimed that their campaign led to the destruction, often

using dynamite, of more than 3,000 churches.

China's leaders see in organized religion, and in particular Christian groups, the last holdout to their absolute domination, reported the newspaper. Although the country's Constitution in theory guarantees the freedom to practice a number of religious creeds, in practice Communist Party authorities only allow leeway to those groups that accept its domination. Compass Direct reported that China's Public Security Bureau arrested 170 Christians at a rural house church meeting in Nanyang, in Henan province, on Sept. 2. The officials singled out 14 key religious leaders for detention, letting the others free after fingerprinting and warning them. Authorities have unleashed a new wave of persecution in recent weeks. On Oct. 20 the Associated Press reported that an activist for an unofficial Christian church was detained after investigating the destruction of churches by authorities in eastern China. Liu Fenggang, 43, was detained in the city of Hangzhou while visiting with leaders of the destroyed churches who had just been released from detention. According to the report, since July at least 10 Christian churches have been torn down by authorities in the Hangzhou area as "illegal religious venues."

On Oct. 27 the Cardinal Kung

Foundation reported that a dozen underground Catholic priests and seminarians who were attending a religious retreat were arrested. The arrests followed the destruction of a Catholic church in Hebei by the Chinese government on June 21. The church had been completed only two weeks before and served 150 parishioners, mostly recent converts. On Nov. 10 the London daily Times reported that authorities in the Zhejiang province outside Shanghai have shut down more than 400 Buddhist temples and Christian churches in a renewed attempt to stamp out underground religious activity. Of these, four churches and 24 temples were destroyed, while 92 temples were transformed into entertainment centers. Zhejiang province is the ancestral home of a large part of the Chinese-American community. The government fears that funds collected in Chinese-American churches in the United States are helping to finance a rapid expansion of underground churches in the region.

Theological reconstruction

But China's efforts are not limited to thwarting unauthorized religious activity. The long-term goal is to influence the theological orientation of believers so they become aligned with the country's rulers.

This ideological dimension was explained in a document published

recently by the human rights organization International Christian Concern. The Washington, D.C.-based group published some notes based on talks given by representatives of the officially recognized Protestant "Three Self Patriotic Church."

Arguing the need for a "theological reconstruction," the Three Self Patriotic Church officials allege that "Christians are told that their citizenship is in heaven, and therefore are urged to refuse the supervision of the authorities and to disobey laws and regulations." Hence, "this has led some churches and innocent believers to oppose the government, to oppose social development and nation building." According to the notes, theological ideas that are "anti-material, anti-rational, anti-social and anti-humanist" must be "abandoned." The implications of the theological position being advocated by Chinese authorities were spelled out recently by a Bishop Ding. He is the most influential leader of the state-controlled Three Self Patriotic Church, according to a Nov. 14 news release by Compass Direct. In a published lecture he gave at the East China Theological Seminary in Shanghai, titled "Theological Construction Enters a New Stage," Ding insists that the Christian beliefs brought to China by 19th-century missionaries intimidated people. "We Chinese Chris-

tians must unite with all the people of China and not be disunited with other people because they do not believe," he stated. "We must remold Chinese Christianity to become a Christianity which ... will be welcomed by the Chinese Communist Party and which is compatible with socialism."

Economic pressure

Westerners who do business in China should insist on greater religious freedom for the country's citizens, said Hong Kong's Bishop Joseph Zen in an interview with the Italian Catholic daily *Avvenire* published Sept. 20.

Interviewed during a visit in Italy, Bishop Zen added he feared that China could someday impose on Hong Kong the same religious repression now being carried out on the mainland. In Hong Kong the Church educates 25% of students in its 300 schools, and Bishop Zen said he also feared authorities may take control of these institutions.

Bishop Zen observed that many thought China's openness on economic matters would, in the long run, lead to greater political freedom. This hope has only been partially fulfilled, he said, and while some progress has been made on religious matters, nothing essential has changed. It's fine to do business with China, he said, but he hopes that this will also lead to interest in human rights.

China is aggressively promoting atheism

Elizabeth Kendal

AUSTRALIA (ANS) — Once upon a time, the Communist Party in the Soviet Union erected blocking towers in Khabarovsk (east coast of Russia) to block out gospel radio signals from Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC) in the Philippines and beyond. Today that Khabarovsk site is the home of FEBC Russia. What's more, some of those who worked for the communists jamming gospel radio signals there still work at that site today, for FEBC Russia, as Christians, broadcasting the gospel.

Albanian Communist dictator Enver Hoxha established Radio Tirana to propagate atheism throughout Albania. But today Trans World Radio (TWR) broadcasts the gospel from that same site. The Living God, who always has the last word, has an amazing

sense of irony.

The Chinese Communist government, however, has decided to combat rising religious activity by actively promoting orthodox atheist Communism. It will discover however, that feeding a spiritually hungry person with atheism is like giving a thirsty person an empty glass. It cannot compete with the One who freely offers "springs of living water" (Isaiah 55:1,2; John 14:13,14).

I look forward to the day (which is most surely coming) when I can write a post-script to this story, similar to the ones above.

Promoting atheism in china

An article in the South China Morning Post on October 22 entitled "Growth in religious activity prompts promotion of communism, atheism" says that the cen-

tral Chinese government has ordered the state media to step up efforts to promote orthodox communism in an effort to curtail the rapid and worrying growth in religious activity.

It reports that the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television recently issued a directive urging all state television and radio broadcasters to produce programs that promote atheism. They are to promote the principles and practice of Marxism, Leninism and Maoism, as well as Deng Xiaoping's theories and the Theory of the Three Represents, and to denounce "deviant beliefs."

The notice said, "A social environment should be fostered to respect science and civilization. Atheism should be promoted by using Falun Gong as a negative example."

The article speculates that the directive indicates government anxiety about the dramatic rise in religious activity.

The article continues: "During the Cultural Revolution, ancient Chinese philosophies such as Confucianism and Taoism along with other religions were condemned as feudal superstitions. But over the past 20 years, as free-market reforms have eclipsed Marxist ideology and social controls have loosened, people have turned to religion again for spiritual fulfillment."

"According to official statistics quoted by the Christian Amity News Service, the number of Christians in Jiangsu province alone grew six fold to 900,000 in 1995, from 125,000 a decade earlier."

"Christian academics estimate

that there are at least 20 million Protestant Christians and 12 million Catholics on the mainland."

Operation World states that an estimated 7.6% of the population of Jiangsu province are Christian, with 1.5% of the population being in the TSPM churches and 5.1% (3.4 times the official number) in the house church networks.

Operation World estimates that in China as a whole some 7.6% of the total population — amounting to more than 91 million out of more than 1.2 billion people — are Christian. The overwhelming majority of those are in non-official house churches.

Elizabeth Kendal is the Principal Researcher and Writer for the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission (WEA RLC) www.worldevangelical.org/rlc.html.

Christmas Story

The Delivery

Ron de Boer

No need to remind me how long it's been since setting foot through these doors. I'm well aware that my bee-hind hasn't warmed the pew for going on six years now. Not since Corrie's funeral. And don't go judging how an elder and deacon and catechism teacher for forty-odd years can up and quit coming to church.

Your wife lies in a bed and the doctors say they can't do squat, and then she dies and you try to pretend everything's normal. But you can't sing; you can't concentrate on the text; you can't even reach for a peppermint without thinking how empty the pew is next to you.

So six years ago this morning – Christmas '97 it was – I decided I couldn't bear to sing no songs about cattle lowing and all ye faithful merry gentlemen. I couldn't bear to take down from the closet the red sweater and red necktie Corrie always laid out on the bed Christmas morning. It just hurt too doggone much to lock the front door, sit in a cold car while it warmed up, then drive into the church parking lot where everyone skipped in through the front door like they were crossing into the Air Canada Centre for the Cup final.

I'm not blaming them for being happy. It's just how can anyone expect a fella to be happy on Christmas morning when his wife of forty-five years isn't hanging onto his arm as he makes his way across the icy parking lot?

So instead of turning left on Tweedsmuir, I kept right on going and found myself behind the bakery unlocking the back door, something I sure as shootin' had never done on a church day. My father probably rolled in his grave the minute my key entered the lock, and my son, John, who, as you know, is a minister out west, probably would've made me a sermon topic about the evils of Sunday work if he found out. In my family, the bakery – any kind of work – is off limits on the Lord's Day and you can times that by ten on Christmas day.

But I didn't give a hoot. I was in grief, you see, and it's funny what the mind will do when you're grieving. You'll think thoughts and do things you'd never believe when you were a young man.

It's not so much you're thinking about your wife; you're sort of thinking like her, sort of looking through her eyes, being her. When you're doing things or thinking things, you're always saying to yourself, "What would Corrie do?"

I'm not trying to be blasphemous. I'm well aware of those WWJD bracelets all the kids are wearing, and I'm not making fun of that. It's just the plain truth. When you live with a woman for 45 years, she becomes part of your very being.

Anyway, if you'd worked in a bakery for as long as I have you'd understand it's the one place where you can think and even forget about some of your troubles. You warm up the ovens and start mixing cake batter and cookie dough, and the next thing you know it's noon hour and the place smells like cinnamon, and you've got tray after tray of cookies and cream puffs and almond tarts waiting to be packaged and sold.

I know what you're thinking. Don't tell me I need give an explanation to the deacons about profiting on work done



on the Lord's Day. John gave me the same look when he found out what I'd been up to. You'll be happy to know I didn't make one shiny copper penny from my work that morning. Without really knowing what I was doing, I loaded all those baked packages in the trunk of the bakery van, went downtown and handed it all out to the fellas down there at that rehab shelter across from the movie theatre. Before then I hadn't given those fellas a fleeting thought – freeloaders I called them, living off the government's teat – but Corrie always had a soft spot for the ones sitting on the cold sidewalk smoking cigarettes in the winter time. "Somebody held that little baby once," she'd say. It's funny the crazy things a grieving man will do. She must be laughing her head off up there when she watches this old knucklehead soften like an August peach.

Anyways, the looks on those fellas faces were priceless. I don't know if it was the memory of Corrie looking at those same fellas or seeing those hard faces turn into a smile, but I admit I felt tears coming. You'd think Sinter Klaas had run over Zwarte Piet and had turned a van of coal into sweet sugary delights. They were so happy when I carried box after box into the shelter. I went home that morning with such a warm-all-over feeling I didn't feel half-guilty for missing the Christmas service.

That was the first Christmas. The next year, I made a couple of phone calls to the two hospitals, and I figured out how many Christmas goodies needed to go to each one. So early on Christmas morning – I'm talking before anyone was awake – I quietly crept in and placed a specially wrapped baked goodie beside every bed. The nurses helped me, of course. They wouldn't let some crazy old man with a sack of Christmas cookies into the bedrooms of children and elderly alike. You could get arrested for less in this town.

I did that for a few years and nobody knew but the special care workers in those places, which suited me just

fine. Corrie never liked no fanfare. She was one of those ladies who catered the church functions, and you pretty much had to get her in a head-lock to get her to come and take a bow in the gym. 'God knows, and that's all that matters,' she'd say.

But then this pimply faced University of Windsor journalist student apprenticing at the local rag came knocking on my door a week before Christmas last year and wanted to do a piece on my good will. He called me the Maple City Santa and let the whole city – including my district elder and everyone else in the church! – know what I'd been up to for the past five years on Christmas morning. He took my picture and splashed the whole thing on the front page of the daily rag.

Well guess what? Every cancer kid and terminal geriatric down at St. Joe's couldn't sleep that night and was up waiting for 'Santa' when I tried to sneak in with my little packages. I think they were disappointed when they saw an old man in a dirty Toronto Maple Leaf winter coat, Pioneer toque and snowmobile boots come clomping into their rooms.

Here's where I knew you were getting involved. Last summer I was going through some boxes in the basement and what do I come across? A box of old Halloween costumes

John used to wear before he grew up and preached the evils of Halloween to his own kids. Corrie had folded every one of those costumes into neat little bundles and had put an elastic with a little scrap of paper with the year underneath.

In 1963, it turns out, John, who was twelve at the time and as big as I am now, went as Santa Claus. Corrie had bundled the whole business – tall black boots, red suit, white beard. I know it sounds crazy, but I sometimes have thoughts – almost whispers – in my head and I think it's Corrie talking to me, even though a rational man would say they were my own thoughts anyway. I heard a voice that day, and for some reason, I up and decided to go through those old boxes in the crawl space.

Within fifteen minutes, I was standing in front of the mirror in a Santa suit.



Christmas Story

Which, of course, brings me to what happened this morning and the reason I'm sitting here and telling you all this.

Last night I hung the Santa suit on the hook against the back wall and set to work mixing batter and filling the ovens with tray after tray of bokkepootjes, stroopwafels, lange vingers – the whole shebang. I felt better than I had in years, and for the first Christmas since becoming Santa, I turned the CBC on and listened to choir after choir singing 'The First Noel' and 'The Little Drummer Boy' and 'Silent Night.' It was as if a choir of angels was lined up in the back alley singing just to me.

It was right during 'Silent Night' when the knock came from the back of the bakery. Now, I've never been one to be scared but a chill ran up and down my spine as I turned down the radio and crept to the back to peer through the little peep hole we drilled in the door years ago to distinguish the delivery men from the bums who wanted to use the washroom.

What I saw made my skin tighten up like a snare drum. There, in the back alley behind the bakery I had worked in for 47 years was Joseph and Mary holding a baby. Behind them stood three Wisemen and some shepherds, all holding canes, the long ones with the big loop on the top.

Well I nearly keeled over, but before I could do anything, Joseph knocked again and then leaned over and looked right into the peep hole – straight into my eyeball. Startled half out of my wits, I stumbled over a mixing pan and landed square on my arse, if you'll pardon my language.

Well there was no sense trying to pretend I wasn't there now, and I have to admit I was a little curious as to why Joseph and Mary and the baby had come to see me, so I surprised even myself when I hid a wooden spoon behind my leg as a weapon and opened the door.

"We thought someone was here," Joseph said. Mary smiled. The baby she was holding was a doll, albeit mighty real looking.

"We're doing a sunrise play in a local church," said a Wiseman.

"We set up and went looking for coffee," said a shepherd.

"Any room in the inn?" smiled Joseph. "All the Tim Hortons' are closed."

The Wisemen were leaning in, admiring my raisin bread.

I should have known right then you were up to something because next thing I'm doing is telling them I'll put on a pot and would they like a slice of fresh raisin bread, too? Well, we finished our coffee and the shepherds downed two whole loaves of raisin bread between them – you'd think they'd been truly walking to Bethlehem all night they were so hungry – and I told them the whole story I just told you about Corrie and me being Santa every Christmas morning.

And then Joseph up and says they had a little extra time so why don't they help me deliver the gifts to the children. So I took down the Santa suit, and we all grabbed a stack of boxes and piled into the bakery van under a perfect starry sky.

I thought Corrie must have been crying with laughter watching all this. She'd always said there wasn't a spontaneous bone in my body, and here I was cruising downtown in a Santa suit with a bunch of actors I'd met not

one hour ago.

Well, you should have seen the looks on the kids' faces when Santa Clause, accompanied by Mary and Joseph, came waltzing through the doors this morning. The older ones wanted to hold the Shepherds' staffs, and the little girls truly thought baby Jesus was a real sleeping baby. Even the nurses from some of the other floors leaned in the doorways to catch a glimpse of us.

After our stop at the General, Joseph said they had to get going to the church, so I drove them back to their rental van in the mall parking lot and sat and watched their tail-lights disappearing onto King street in the early silvery

to see that the United church was still as dark as night, so I turned up Wellington, only to find that the Anglicans and Presbyterians were still counting sugar plumbs, too. So I headed over to St. Pete's out behind the public library. There were some cars there, but there wasn't a soul in sight.

Then it was as if I wasn't driving that van at all because it suddenly turned up Queen and then hung a right onto Tweedsmuir. Sure enough, there was the rental van sitting right in front of the church I hadn't set foot in for six years.

I hit the brakes. I recognized lots of the cars parked there – I'd been on committees with many of them over the years – and I froze. I looked at my watch. 7:00 a.m. The service had started.

How in the world could they do a Christmas play without the baby Jesus? I thought.

But then that voice – call it Corrie's, call it my own – said I didn't have any choice. I had to go in. I've learned not to argue with the voice; just like Corrie before she died, the voice was always right, despite my stubborn nature to think otherwise.

So I tore into the parking lot and screeched my tires right by the front doors. I leaped out of the van – baby Jesus in my arms – threw open the glass doors and climbed the stairs into the foyer as fast as these old legs could carry me.

One of the ushers – Harm's boy, I think – looked at me in surprise, and then I remembered I was still wearing this old Santa suit. But my legs kept right on walking until I was standing at the back of the sanctuary and looking down the long carpeted aisle to the front of the church where the whole manger scene was set up: Joseph and Mary, the shepherds and Wiseman – and an empty manger.

I took a deep breath and marched up that aisle with the baby Jesus in my arms. Well, you saw me.

The looks on everyone's faces! You'd think I was some drunk from the east end who'd stumbled in from a Christmas Eve party. I almost lost my nerve and high-tailed it out of there. But then dear, dear Jean Vandersluis in her best Christmas hat turned to me and smiled, and I knew I'd done the right thing.

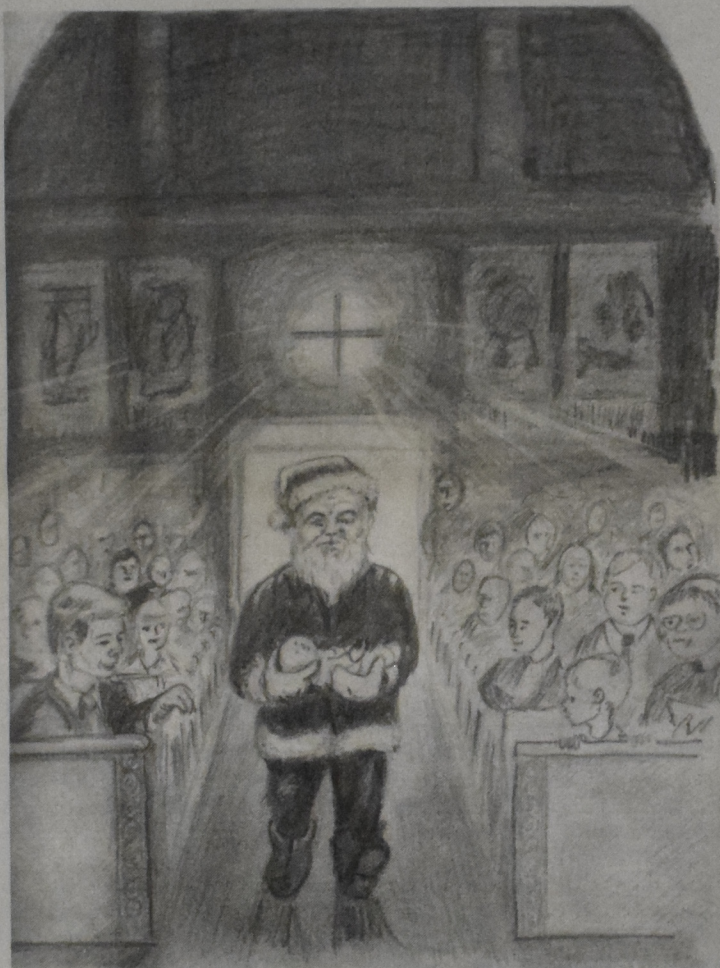
Well you saw it. You could have heard a needle drop everything got so quiet when I placed that baby Jesus in the manger. When I turned around, there were people crying and smiling at me. Mary even put her hand on my shoulder.

It was at that moment that I felt something change inside of me. The minute that baby's head touched the hay in that manger, it was like someone had lifted a veil off me right then; everything got real clear; I knew I was home again.

I have to think Corrie was smiling, too.

Anyway, that's why I'm still sitting here, even though everyone's gone. And you can expect that I'll be back from now on and calling on you a little more often, too. I'm sorry for talking a little harshly to you this morning. I'm a bit out of practice. I just wanted to say thank you for sending your son to me this morning.

I pray this all in his name, amen.



light of Christmas morning. Nice folks, I thought. Good sense of humor showing up at the bakery in all their costumes.

I drove slowly back to the bakery, parked in the alley and turned off the ignition. Everything was perfectly still, and I sat there for a while knowing exactly what 'silent night' meant.

It was right then while leaning on my steering wheel – an old Santa in a beat-up bakery delivery van – that I noticed baby Jesus looking at me in the rear view mirror. He was sitting upright on the seat, right where Mary and Joseph had been sitting.

Well, did you see me jump? I fired up the old girl, threw her into drive and screeched out of that alley and onto William street so fast you'd think I'd just robbed the CIBC.

Now, our town's not very big – we've only got a dozen or so churches and most of them are right near the downtown. I headed up William, but I didn't even have to stop

Christmas Story

The Little White Card

Didy Prinzen

Well, he should be getting up and head back. He couldn't stretch it any longer. The women wanted to clean up and go home. At least, that's what he thought....

Lately he had been coming to the kitchen early. Not for the food, supper wasn't served until five o'clock, but for the simple reason that he liked to bask himself in the warmth of the kitchen, the smell of food and the cheerfulness of the women. He had nothing else to do anyway. And these women clattered and chattered up a storm! Yes, it felt mighty good to be here. In fact, he didn't know where he'd rather be.

But... the last few days he hadn't felt like getting up right away after the meal and he seemed to have to sit for a while. He found the walk to the kitchen becoming more and more tiring and was always glad when he got there. At the same time ... he knew he had to get back to his room. And he wished he would be able to get a place closer by. Something like a small bachelor's apartment, instead of the room he now occupied in the hotel. But that was beyond his means and it always would be.

As he headed for the door, he heard one of the women call out, "Good night, Frankie!"

He knew who she was. It was Annie! He'd been waiting for that. And he turned around and said, "Good night to you too, and ... thank you!"

Annie always seemed to notice him leave. It was amazing. Why she kept her eye on him he didn't know. He certainly wasn't much to look at, he thought wryly. Likely it was just her friendly nature....

Just the same, he always found himself kind of waiting for her goodbye. It wasn't that the other women were not friendly but Annie, well ... she was special. It warmed his heart that she singled him out. Yes, it did! Because there wasn't much left in life to warm him.

As he stepped out the door and on to the street, a gust of cold air and snow hit him. It was so bad outside that he almost turned back into the warm kitchen. But, no, he mustn't do that. He could not stay here. He would have to somehow make it to his room. Pulling down his hat so it partly covered his eyes too, he ducked deep into his collar and ventured out.

While he labored through the slush and snow that had gathered on the sidewalk he tried to forget about the weather and mused instead on his good fortune of having the kitchen to go to for a meal. And of having Annie saying good night to him every day. Yes, especially that. It gave him a chance to say "thank you," too. That was the least one could do in return for a warm meal.



Taken from Book, A Northern Nativity, by William Kurelek.

But not everybody there did. Some of them had the nerve even to complain and bicker about the food. They certainly hadn't had the upbringing he had - bless his godly mother....

"Watch where you're going, old man!"

He suddenly found himself struggling to stay on his feet as someone from behind brushed past him. It was a young punk! Yes, young punks, that's what he called them. Regaining his balance, he thought about the fact that there wasn't any respect for the elderly anymore. Especially not for his kind. Besides that, it was pretty unfair to accuse him of not watching out. Only a small path had been cleared off the sidewalk and it was snowing again. Nevertheless, the incident made him feel more miserable than he already did.

His feet were getting wet again. They'd partly dried in the kitchen but they didn't stay dry very long, walking in the slush with leaky boots.

He'd been happy with them boots, though. He'd gotten them from the Salvation Army. They had looked like good leather boots but it hadn't taken long before they started to leak between the rubber soles and the leather. And really ... who in his right mind would give away boots that were still good? At least they had good traction and kept him from slipping. If given the choice, he'd rather have boots that were safe to walk on than boots that kept his feet dry. At his age he

just couldn't afford to take a tumble. What in the world would he do if he couldn't make it to the kitchen any longer? He surely couldn't afford to eat in the hotel. After he had paid for his room, there was precious little money left.

That reminded him - he should get up early in the morning and find himself some more cigarette butts outside the bar. Mind you, he didn't like doing that; if his mother could see that he had come to this, she would have been ashamed of him. Yes, she would!

But he just had to do it to hold him over 'till the end of the month. He just couldn't do without his smokes. He'd take the tobacco out of the butts and roll new ones. Maybe he'd find some small cash, too. People were careless with their money coming out of the bar, not being sober anymore. Once, he'd even found a ten dollar bill. Man, that had been a surprise!

But, again, he wasn't looking forward to it. It was no fun, getting up that early in the morning, and now he thought he had better make it real early, like at one instead of at two o'clock. There were more guys coming out with the same thing in mind. Everybody was out of money this time of month. It was just that ... well, he had to admit, he didn't feel very safe on the street at that time of night. No, he didn't. But he had learned to make himself inconspicuous. Being small of stature and slightly bent over he was

closer to the ground than anyone else. At least, nobody in his right mind would feel himself threatened by him, that was for sure. But they could easily knock him over too, and grab what he got. If not worse. He sniffed... that's all he did tonight, sniffen! Must be the cold that made his nose run. And nothing else to wipe with than his mitt.

Just when he felt himself getting awfully tired he spotted the window sill where he usually rested for a little while. With a sigh of relief he wiped the snow off it and sat down. That felt good, it offered just enough room for his bottom. He sure didn't need a lot of room to sit anymore, did he! Which was, come to think of it, a good thing. He had always felt like making himself smaller anyway. Because he didn't like to be noticed. Although, thinking of Annie... he didn't mind that she noticed him.

But, being honest, and one had to be honest with himself, that's what his mother had always said too, what good was he in the world anyway? What good had he ever been - a scrawny, little fellow, living off the government longer than he could even remember?

Lately, he often worried about what would happen to him when he couldn't take care of himself any longer. He felt that time speedily approaching. He also knew he wasn't allowed to take matters into his own hands, even though the thought sometimes entered his mind. But really, what in the world could he expect in the future? Would he maybe die in his room, all by himself? Or would someone perhaps put him into a place with other old people? But he didn't like to be with other people, had always kept to himself. Again he felt in the pit of his stomach that recurring fear for the future....

His train of thought was momentarily diverted by the sound of a bell. From where he sat he could see a Salvation Army man standing by the familiar kettle in front of a store. Christmas couldn't be too far away. Not that it made much difference to him, Christmas or no Christmas. Except for maybe a turkey dinner in the kitchen with Annie. He found himself almost warming up a little inside with the thought of it....

That man there in his army suit made him think of his mother again. Strange.... He wondered why she kept coming to his mind tonight. He could even conjure up her image tonight and hear her say things. Likely just plain old age. That's what old people did -- go back to their youth. But seeing that man there made him remember that his mother had taken them to the Salvation Army hall on Sundays for church. Him and his little brother.

And now he heard her say again,

Christmas Story

"Boys, remember, these Army people are the best people in the world. They are God's soldiers."

At the time, he hadn't really understood what she meant. Soldiers fought, didn't they? But now he knew. Yes, sirree! They were fighting for the poor. Wasn't he getting all of his clothes from the Army too?

Too bad here they had built that big church. He wouldn't dare set foot in it. Even though he sometimes felt a need for a good word. Yes, he did. Back then the meetings were held in a simple hall. But all that had changed

No sirree, no fancy buildings for him. He simply wouldn't fit in and wouldn't feel at home. But, church or no church, there was peace in his heart. Yes, there was. And for that he was grateful.

While he sat there, he almost started to feel a kinship with the Army man. For the man was cold too, he could tell: he was stamping his feet just about all the time. Standing still did that to you. He shouldn't sit here too long either.

He noticed a lady putting a bill into the man's kettle. Not a loony or a toony but it was a bill because she had to push it down. That was good. The money was for the poor and he considered himself one of them. He wouldn't be surprised if the Army had also a finger so to speak in the dinners he got in the kitchen.

The Army man touched his cap acknowledging the gift and handed the lady something. He found himself wondering what that could be. Knowing the Army people, he guessed it was most likely a message of encouragement of

some sort. And to his surprise he felt a need arising from within himself for a good word.

Suddenly an idea entered his head. What if he put a coin in that kettle.... Would he get a message too? And he now felt how desperately he wanted one. All of a sudden he got up, took off his mitt and grappled in his pocket to see if he still had some change. Sure enough, he felt a quarter! Probably his last one, but suddenly that didn't concern him.

But while he stood there, ready to go for it, he hesitated. Did he dare to walk up to that army soldier in his uniform and put a quarter in the kettle? What would the man think? Maybe he had spotted him sitting here already. It was obvious that he belonged, so to speak, on the other end of the kettle.

But, what the heck, all at once he made up his mind. Straightening his back, trying to look the best he could, he walked towards the man with the kettle. And, avoiding the man's eyes, with a shaky hand he managed to drop the quarter in its slot.

Handing him a little white card, the man just said, "Thank you, and may God bless you." It was as simple as that.

His heart was pounding and he was suddenly filled with expectation. "Easy now," he told himself, not wanting to show the man his excitement. Hanging on to the little piece of paper, he continued to walk 'till he figured he was out of sight.

Then he could wait no longer. He stopped in the light of a shop window and looked at the little white card in his

hand. It had a pretty Christmas scene on the front: Mary and Joseph and the newborn Jesus, not in a stable in Bethlehem but in a city – in fact, in a neighborhood just like his. They looked like any young couple on their way home, Mary pushing the baby carriage with the baby glowing inside.

Bringing it close and straining his eyes to see, he read, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Sam. 16:7). And underneath that it read, "I do not depend on others for my value; God's love is inside me and that makes all the difference."

Holding his message that had come straight from God for him, he was unaware of his surroundings, of a few people almost bumping into him again. His feelings of worthlessness had disappeared like snow disappears in the sun. Tears trickled down his cheeks and he felt warm all over. Something like when Annie said her goodbye, only much more so.

He looked up, up over the roofs of the buildings. It was snowing harder and as he looked up the swirling snow glowed with light, shaping itself into great white figures that dissolved once again into curtains of snow. It looked as though the sky was filled with angels! It was an awesome sight.

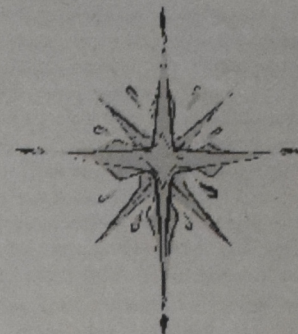
When he looked around, the people on the street were also turning white, like the figures in the Christmas card. Across the street, two people were coming toward him through the curtain of snow – a man and a woman pushing a baby carriage – and they were on their way toward his house.

Hurry. He had to hurry home to receive them. Yes, he was as sure of it than anything in his whole life: they were coming to stay with him.

As he began to hurry home, his heart was filled with light and color and warmth. Yes, he'd make room for them; there was time, plenty of time....

From the distance came the happy tinkling of a bell.

No Silent Night



It was not a silent night. Men were questioning what this strange starlight meant. Others, roused in midst of their watch,

no longer questioned. For their night was split with the shock of a choir of angels shouting, "Glory to God, the Christ child comes!"

It was not a silent night. It was a noisy confusing night. The city was congested, tempers were short, the inns were crowded – all of them. And Mary and Joseph – what did their hearts cry when they saw the lowly birth bed?

It was not a silent night. His coming tore a woman's body. His coming was hard – dreadfully hard for everyone involved. His coming was not a mythical anesthetized 20th century dream. It was hard and cold. It was heavy.

But it was not silent. He forever split our darkness with the proclamation of angels that the Light of the world was shining.

That for all ages to come we would know that heaven is not silent. For God has spoken. He has come.

Debbie Wallis



Christmas Story

The Lord is my shepherd

Berta Hosmar

Hannah surveyed her living quarters with a critical eye. Yes, everything looked tidy. The floor had been swept, the table had been cleared of unnecessary clutter and even boasted a bouquet of wild-flowers, while the shelves on the wall were neatly stacked with cups and platters and kitchen utensils. In the adjoining room her mother-in-law and her nine-year-old son Stephen were taking their afternoon nap.

That only left five-year-old Rebecca unaccounted for. Soon it would be time to prepare the evening meal, but if Rebecca was still amusing herself with her friends in the yard, Hannah could take a short break between chores.

She stepped outside into the bright afternoon sunshine. A few fig trees provided shade, and gratefully Hannah sat down and took a deep breath. Living on the outskirts of Bethlehem had its advantages. True, she had to walk farther to fetch water from the well or buy her provisions in the marketplace, but they had lots of room around the house.

She could grow some vegetables, a few beehives provided them with honey, and they even kept a few sheep. Spinning the wool and making garments kept her mother-in-law sort of busy and out of Hannah's hair for brief periods of time.

"If only she would not try to interfere with the upbringing of my children. Trying to keep my husband and Stephen and Rebecca happy is about as much as I can do with a child like Stephen around me all day long. She doesn't have to keep telling me how to handle him and that I also have a healthy daughter who needs my attention. As if I didn't know! But disabled as he is, Stephen only gives me a break when he's asleep."

Stephen, their only son. It still hurt to recall how a mysterious fever had destroyed the physical and mental health of her once bright, happy little boy. A fever that, when it finally broke after several days, had left him unable to walk or talk and had left him functioning at the level of a two-year-old who needed total care. His frequent violent temper tantrums left her exhausted, and taking care of him isolated her from her neighbors and friends. How she missed their company!

Oh, people were friendly alright, but she could not take her son for visits, because he disrupted their get-togethers. Gradually people got used to the fact that Hannah was always busy with her son, and the generous help they had offered at first had gradually dwindled and then slowly stopped. That was life. Other people had their burdens too.

Whenever she went to the marketplace, she had to rush back, for she did not dare to leave her mother-in-law alone with Stephen

for long. Her life had become so lonely. True, Reuben came home after a long day spent at his shop in the marketplace. He would have his supper, help her with some chores, play a little with the children and then it was time for bed. Early the next morning he had to leave again for work, and every day at home was the same for Hannah, except for the Sabbath.

"Is this how my life is going to be until I die?" Hannah thought bitterly. "I love my family more than life itself, but I'm stuck in my house with a bossy and often ill-tempered mother-in-law and a daughter who needs me to be happy and a son who will never get well. At least Reuben is out all day and meets people.

"Does he have a clue as to how depressed and isolated I often feel? Does anybody care? Does Jehovah care? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who delivered my people from Egypt and brought them to this land centuries ago? But look at this land now! The Romans rule us with an iron fist, and God has not sent us the promised Deliverer. Will He ever? Do we still have prophets like in days of old, and if so, where are they? Do people like me matter to Jehovah?"

Suddenly Hannah realized that she had not seen Rebecca or any of her friends. Where were those children?

"Rebecca, where are you?" she called repeatedly. But it took a while before she heard a fearful little voice answer: "I'm nowhere, mother."

From experience Hannah knew this answer spelled trouble. Her imaginative little daughter had been up to some mischief.

"Tell me where you are hiding," she ordered.

But when she spotted her child behind some bushes, she was momentarily speechless.

Rebecca was squatting beside a fire pit neatly made with stones, a bunch of twigs and a pot from her kitchen shelves. Nearby stood a pan with flour and a jar of water.

"What on earth are you doing?" she asked, knowing what her daughter had been up to, but wanting to hear Rebecca say it.

"I wanted to surprise you and bake bread, but I can't get the fire going," was the timid reply.

"Children may never play with fire or make a fire unless a grown-up is present, you know that Rebecca. Why didn't you invite some friends to come over and play house like I suggested?" Hannah said kindly, looking fondly at her beautiful little girl.

But the child's answer broke her heart. "They don't want to come here anymore. They're afraid of Stephen. He crawls all over the place and interferes with our playing. And sometimes he gets so mad he hits us.

"I don't mind, I'm used to it, but they mind."

"Maybe you can go to their house more often," was all Hannah managed to reply.

Some piercing screams from her son made her run inside.

Rebecca followed her mother indoors. "Grandma," she cried. "You're awake! Do you want me to wipe your nose? It's dripping! And I can help you cut those long black hairs growing on that funny bump on your cheek.

"And would you help me spin some more wool? I'm so bored!"

Rebecca chatted on, happy again, blissfully unaware of the withering look her grandmother gave Hannah, a look that said: "You should have taught your daughter to show some respect to the elderly!"

After the evening meal, when the children were tucked in for the night and grandmother was dozing in her chair, they finally had a some time together and went outside.

"Don't let mother's attitude bother you so much," Reuben urged, trying to comfort Hannah. "She's old and I know she's bossy, but we're all the family she has, and deep-down she loves us all dearly."

"I sometimes feel I can't handle our situation anymore," whispered Hannah, weeping softly. "Stephen wears me out, for I can't leave him unsupervised for a minute. He would harm himself, for he is into everything. When I pick him up to remove him from danger, he kicks and screams and even frightens Rebecca's friends.

"He was such a beautiful little boy and my love for him is like an ache deep within me. But what is going to happen to him when we are gone? Scripture tells us that Jehovah is a loving God, but why is he punishing us? Did we commit such grievous sins that Stephen had to become disabled?"

Reuben put his arms around his wife and was quiet for some time.

"He is hurting as much as I am," Hannah realized.

Then Reuben softly recited: "The Lord is our Shepherd, we shall not want. He leads us to quiet pastures.... He restores our souls...."

It was good to sit outside in the fading light, and slowly Hannah's rebellion vanished. "I am going to get my robe and sit outside for a little while longer," she told her husband when he announced it was bedtime.



Detail from etching of Jesus standing among the sick by Dutch master Rembrandt van Rijn.

It was so peaceful to sit here all alone with nobody making demands on her. A spectacular sunset had painted the sky with hues of red and gold and purple a little while ago. Now that sky had changed to a velvety dark decorated with millions of stars.

Hannah dozed off, until she suddenly awoke with a start.

Quite a distance from their house were the Shepherd's Fields. She could not see those fields in the dark but when she stood up she spotted, far away in that hillcountry, a brilliant light. What was it? It seemed as if a star had fallen from the sky. She sensed something strange in the atmosphere, as if nature was waiting for something.... Then her eyes were drawn upwards.

Enraptured she stared... and listened... then fell on her knees.

What else could she do when above her she heard the most glorious music and saw a sky filled with jubilant angels, coming straight from the heavens, straight from God's throne?

What was this?

Could it be possible that the Redeemer was finally coming? God with us?

Oh, but God was here, she could feel it with her whole being! He cared about the world he had created. He cared about her.

Such peace and love filled her heart that she stayed outside long after the angels had gone back to their heavenly realms.

Yes, she would wake up Reuben and tell him. And, yes, tomorrow she would undoubtedly hear more about this glorious miracle.

But for now she lingered to bask in Jehovah's love just a little while longer, and to thank him for the peace he had brought to her aching heart, a peace that would give her the strength to carry on.

"You restored my soul," she whispered.

Christmas

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 'In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 'The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. John 1:1

The world in darkness lay. Bereft of light. As it was in the beginning before God spoke.

In darkness meaning unable to see ahead to the horizon, unable to find ones way through the streets even through ones own house, groping about like a blind man, stumbling, falling, getting lost, crying out in pain and frustration.

In darkness where the truth is hidden and falsehood reigns, where evil plots are hatched, where thieves and murderers lie in wait for the unsuspecting.

In darkness where we do not see the other's faces, where we shrink away from them in suspicion and fear, where we feel alone and exposed.

In darkness where the sound of approaching footsteps make my throat constrict. I want to cry out, but to whom shall I cry?

In darkness where the boundaries and the beauties of the world are blotted out and the black immensity of space sweeps in like a cold, evil wind, robbing us of hope, of will, of a sense of direction. We hardly know where to turn, where to look.

And yet in the depths of that darkness, deep in the souls of men that spark of longing burns undiminished, becomes intense, searing the soul till it is all ache and wound.

Till the only self we have is emptiness, a receptacle extended into the darkness.

It is not a darkness that is still and peaceful; it is a darkness throbbing and heaving with activity. Soldiers and caravans moving in long lines from town to town carrying out the commands and the commerce of imperial Rome, extorting taxes, transporting prisoners, fattening the coffers of the rich and the powerful and driving the poor like oxen before the plow.

Governors, kings, generals and commanders – all build walls, stockades, fortifications, castles to protect themselves from what seethes and festers in the darkness. Who knows what monsters of hatred and sedition the darkness is hatching? Who knows what wrathful beings rule the nether regions? Who knows what forces are gathering themselves against us out there beyond the reach of light. What kinds of weapons do they wield, what fierce creatures do they ride, and what kinds of cruelties do they practice?

Listen to the darkness. Listen to the night. It is filled with the creaking of huge iron wheels, the rattle and clink of armor, the grunts and curses of creatures of darkness. The darkness breeds a race of wolves, of predators.

It is into such a darkness that the light breaks, tense with fear and expectation. It arcs across the sky like a flaming arrow and explodes into angel wings, thousands of angel wings, and instruments not of war but of music – horns and bugles and trumpets all radiating out across the sky from horizon to horizon and then blending, merging into one voice, the voice of God's own messenger.

"Fear not!"

The Dawning

Ah! what time wilt thou come? when shall that cry,
'The Bridegroom's coming!' fill the sky?
Shall it in the evening run

When our words and works are done?

Or will thy all-surprising light

Break at midnight,

When either sleep or some dark pleasure

Possesseth mad man without measure?

Or shall these early fragrant hours

Unlock thy bowers,

And with their blush of light descry

Thy locks crowned with eternity?

Indeed it is the only time

That with thy glory doth best chime:

All now are stirring, every field

Full hymns doth yield,

The whole creation shakes off night,

And for thy shadow looks the light;

Stars now vanish without number,

Sleepy planets set, and slumber,

The pury clouds disband, and scatter;

All expect some sudden matter,

Not one beam triumphs, but from far

That morning-star.

O at what time soever thou,
Unknown to us, the heavens wilt bow,
And with thy angels in the van
Descend to judge poor careless man,
Grant, I may not like puddle lie
In a corrupt security
Where, if a traveller water crave,
He finds it dead, and in a grave.
But as this restless vocal spring
All day and night doth run, and sing,
And though here born, yet is acquainted
Elsewhere, and flowing keeps untainted;
So let me all my busy age
In thy free services engage,
And though, while here, of force I must
Have commerce sometimes with poor dust,
And in my flesh, though vile, and low,
As this doth in her channel flow,
Yet let my course, my aim, my love
And chief acquaintance be above;
So when that day and hour shall come
In which thyself will be the sun,
Thou'lt find me dressed and on my way
Watching the break of thy great day.

Henry Vaughan



The census at Bethlehem was given a 16th-century setting in Flanders by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1525-1569). Joseph leads an ox and ass on which Mary is seated.

Christmas

In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.



Rogier Van Der Weyden, Annunciation, oil on panel, circa 1434, in the Musee du Louvre, Paris.

Annunciation

"Be it done to me according to your word,"
she tells the angel with a curtsy.
Well brought up, she knows her place,
knows what to say to her betters,

Well brought up, she does not wonder aloud
but wonders silently about the Refiner's Fire
and how will she abide the day of his coming
and how will she stand when he appears?

Well brought up,
she bothers nobody. Alone
she waits for the apocalypse
of birth.

Sietze Buning

The Annunciation

The angel and the girl are met.
Earth was the only meeting place.
For the embodied never yet
Travelled beyond the shore of space.
The eternal spirits in freedom go.

See, they have come together, see,
While the destroying minutes flow,
Each reflects the other's face
Till heaven in hers and earth in his
Shine steady there. He's come to her
From far beyond the farthest star,
Feathered through time. Immediacy
Of strangest strangeness is the bliss
That from their limbs all movement takes.
Yet the increasing rapture brings
So great a wonder that it makes
Each feather tremble on his wings.

Outside the window footsteps fall
Into the ordinary day
And with the sun along the wall
Pursue their unreturning way.
Sound's perpetual roundabout
Rolls its numbered octaves out
And hoarsely grinds its battered tune.

But through the endless afternoon
These neither speak nor movement make,
But stare into their deepening trance
As if their gaze would never break.

Edwin Muir

He has come

He has come! the Christ of God;
Left for us His glad abode,
Stooping from His throne of bliss,
To this darksome wilderness.

He has come! the Prince of Peace;
Come to bid our sorrows cease;
Come to scatter with His light
All the darkness of our night.

He, the Mighty King, has come!
Making this poor world His home;
Come to bear our sin's sad load,—
Son of David, Son of God!

He has come whose name of grace
Speaks deliverance to our race;
Left for us His glad abode, —
Son of Mary, Son of God!

Unto us a Child is born!
Ne'er has earth beheld a morn,
Among all the morns of time,
Half so glorious in its prime!

Unto us a Son is given!
He has come from God's own heaven,
Bringing with Him, from above,
Holy peace and holy love.

Horatius Bonar

Painting by Georges de La Tour (1593-1652). The candle held by Joseph, casts a radiant glow on the baby Jesus and Mary.



Christmas

This was the true light that gives light to every man who comes into the world



Adoration of the Shepherds, by Martin Schongauer, circa 1472, in Berlin.

Journey of the Magi

"A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter."
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

T. S. Eliot

Bethlehem Outcast

Is there no warmth to heal me any more,
Straining to glimpse His manger, clutched by chills
Upon the lintel of the stable door;

Thawed by His breath, the oxen foul the floor,
While through my reedy bones the north wind shrills:
Is there no warmth to heal me any more?

Darkward His radiance reaches to explore
All nights but one whose shudder never stills
Upon the lintel of the stable door

Through which the gutturals of the shepherds soar
In flight with singing star-bursts from the hills.
Is there no warmth to heal me anymore?

Watching the magi yield Him royal store,
I wait held back and bound between two wills
Upon the lintel of the stable door.

Christ, save this wiseman without winter lore,
This bumpkin naked to the cold that kills!
Is there no warmth to heal me any more
Upon the lintel of the stable door?

Vassar Miller



Adoration of the Magi, oil painting by Abraham Bloemaert, in the Centraal Museum, Utrecht, Neth.

Christmas

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

The Flight in the Desert

The last settlement scraggled out with a barbed wire fence
And fell from sight. They crossed coyote country:
Mesquite, sage, the bunchgrass knotted in patches;
And there the prairie dog yapped in the valley;
And on the high plateau the short-armed badger
Delved his clay. But beyond that the desert,
Raw, unslakable, its perjured dominion wholly contained
In the sun's remorseless mandate, where the dim trail
Died ahead in the watery horizon: God knows where.

And there the failures: skull of the ox,
Where the animal terror trembled on in the hollowed eyes;
The catastrophic wheel, split, sandbedded;
And the sad jawbone of a horse. These the denials
Of the retributive tribes, fiercer than pestilence,
Whose scrupulous realm this was.

Only the burro took no notice: the forefoot
Placed with the nice particularity of one
To whom the evil of the day is wholly sufficient.
Even the jocular ears marked time.
But they, the man and the anxious woman,
Who stared pinch-eyed into the settling sun,
They went forward into its denseness

All apprehensive, and would many a time have turned
But for what they carried. That brought them on.
In the gritty blanket they bore the world's great risk,
And knew it; and kept it covered, near to the blind heart,
That hugs in a bad hour its sweetest need,
Possessed against the drawn night
That comes now, over the dead arroyos,
Cold and acrid and black.

This was the first of his goings forth into the wilderness of the world.
There was much to follow: much of portent, much of dread.
But what was so meek then and so mere, so slight and strengthless,
(Too tender, almost, to be touched) – what they nervously guarded
Guarded them. As we, each day, from the lifted chalice,
That strengthless Bread the mildest tongue subsumes,
To be taken out in the blatant kingdom
Where Herod sweats, and his deft henchmen
Riffle the tabloids – that keeps us.

Over the campfire the desert moon
Slivers the west, too chaste and cleanly
To mean hard luck. The man rattles the skillet
To take the raw edge off the silence;
The woman lifts up her heart; the Infant
Knuckles the generous breast, and feeds.

William Everson (Brother Antoninus)



Flight into Egypt, 1609, by Adam Elsheimer. Painting housed in Munich. The painting evokes the profound sense of loneliness of the journey.

Christmas Ideas

I'm dreaming of a green Christmas — environmentally friendly gift giving alternatives

Lisa M. Petsche

During this time of year, many of us stress ourselves to the limit, seeking the "perfect" gift for everyone on our list, shopping until we drop and spending beyond our means.

But besides saving our sanity, avoiding debt and of course focusing more on the religious aspect of the season, there's another reason to combat Christmas commercialism: protecting our planet's natural resources.

During the holiday season, household waste increases by more than 25 per cent, the extra garbage consisting primarily of shopping bags, product packaging and gift wrap.

Given the environmental crisis, we all have an obligation to change our holiday habits, especially when it comes to gift giving.

Our first consideration should be reducing the number of gifts we give.

If exchanging gifts with certain people no longer holds meaning, tactfully suggest discontinuing the

ritual; chances are they, too, will be relieved. Other strategies include drawing names (we've gone this route in my growing extended family), pooling resources (my sisters and I often do this for gifts for our parents), giving couple or family presents, and giving one or two major gifts your children and spouse really want (as long as they're within your budget), instead of numerous smaller-scale ones.

When pondering what type of presents to give, consider non-material options first. These include gifts of experience that allow the recipient to try something new, such as a yoga class or dance lessons, or an offer to teach a skill you possess; membership in an organization — an automobile club or naturalist group, for example — that will benefit the recipient or a favorite cause (last year we gave our son a membership in the Save the Manatee Club, since he'd developed a special interest in this endangered species during a trip to Florida); a long-distance phone card; a gift certificate for a res-

taurant or a professional service such as a massage, manicure or housecleaning; tickets to a cultural or sporting event; and movie or museum passes.

Another great idea is IOU coupons for gifts of time or service. The possibilities are almost endless and include child care, home-cooked meals, chauffeuring, running errands, performing various household chores, car washing, dog walking and hairstyling.

For the person who seems to have everything, consider a relevant charitable donation in their name or in memory of a recently deceased relative or pet.

If you wish to give something tangible, homemade gifts are ideal and tend to be most highly valued — jam, sauce or sweets from your kitchen, art work or a handcrafted item, for instance.

When seeking something store-bought, avoid products that are trendy, disposable, have limited use, require batteries or don't appear durable. Instead, give preference to items that are made from recycled materials or can be re-

cycled, have minimal packaging — preferably recyclable, are energy-efficient, focus on nature — a potted plant or bird feeder, for example, or for which the proceeds go to an environmental organization. If you're unsure what to give, choose a gift certificate from the recipient's favorite place to shop, if known, otherwise from a large department store or bookstore. Don't forget to bring your own bags on shopping trips (keep some in your vehicle).

For wrapping, choose re-usable, easy-to-store gift bags and boxes, or make the wrapping part of the gift — for example, a scarf, dish towel or photo storage box. Challenge yourself and your kids to be creative. With over-sized gifts, use a green garbage bag tied with red ribbon or adorned with a big bow. Better yet, leave the item unwrapped, hide it and provide clues on where to find it.

Try to do without wrapping paper altogether; newspaper comics and store flyers are a good substitute when a bag or box won't

do. If you do buy paper, ensure it's made from recycled materials. Get your kids to help make gift tags from old Christmas cards.

After the presents are opened, salvage as much of the wrapping as possible for re-use: bags, boxes, large sheets of paper, ribbon, bows and gift tags. Keep these together in one box, making it easy to access them and take inventory. A clear plastic tote is a good choice; if you're short on space, get the kind designed for underbed storage. Meanwhile, damaged boxes and torn gift wrap can be recycled.

In today's materialistic society, and especially during this season of hyper-consumerism, it's easy to forget that we don't have to give something tangible or spend a single cent to show loved ones we care. In fact, gifts of self — time and talent — are the most valuable presents we can give, not only at Christmas but year-round.

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three and freelance writer with a special interest in environmental issues.

Christmas in Our Public Schools

Walt Brouwer

With the advent of Christmas fast approaching, many Canadians will again be embroiled in a debate about what to do with "Christmas" in our public schools. Last year about this time, one of my sons was asked to make a case in his classroom for using the word Christmas in public schools. This issue had been brewing here in Nanaimo and the public school board was actively dealing with it. In fact, the controversy eventually helped sack our local public school superintendent under much acrimony. When my son Mike asked for my help, here is what we came up with.

As Christians we have an interest in trying to stem the erosion not just of Christian language, but the Judeo-Christian values associated with it. Jude writes, "Dearly loved friends, . . . I must write . . . urging you to defend the truth of the Good News. God gave this unchanging truth once for all time to his holy people" (verse 3, Nlt). So I would suggest that if someone asks you about using the word

Christmas in a public setting, here are some things you could think about without coming across as a fanatic.

First, Canada is a multicultural society, and this cuts both ways. Unlike the "melting pot" that characterizes our neighbors to the south, Canada abides by the political doctrine of multiculturalism. As a multicultural society Canada agrees to value the different cultures and religions that make up our contemporary society. Multiculturalism does not mean the suppression of religion, but the accommodation of religion without the promotion of it.

The suppression of religion means to deny the existence of religion. The accommodation of religion means to acknowledge the existence of religion without actively furthering its cause. To deny the use of Christmas in our public schools would be the suppression of religion, not the accommodation of religion and therefore a violation of the multicultural character of our Canadian society.

Second, there is Canada's his-



torical identity. Christmas is part of Christianity and Christianity is an important part of Canada's historical identity. Change, rewrite or suppress the facts of history and you change our national identity that has emerged from it. To deny the use of Christmas in our public schools would be to deny an important part of our identity as Canadians.

Third, we believe in freedom of religion, not from religion. Canada believes in the separation of church

and state. This means that the church will not interfere with the affairs of government, and vice versa. Separation between church and state means freedom of religion, not freedom from religion.

Freedom from religion means the suppression of religion and flies in the face of Canada's multiculturalism. Freedom of religion means that all Canadians have the freedom to choose their own religion without fear of reprisal. To deny the use of Christmas in our

public schools would be an attempt to suppress religion rather than to allow the free expression of religious convictions and values.

Fourth, there is the logic of it all. If you cannot mention "Christmas" since it is a Christian word and by using it you are alleged to promote Christianity, then where does this logic stop? How could a social sciences teacher teach the history of Western civilization without reference to Christianity, Christian thinkers and movements? Or how could an English teacher teach Shakespeare, as Shakespeare cannot be adequately appreciated without significant knowledge of the Christian Bible? To deny the use of Christmas in our public schools simply because it is a Christian word would lead to irrationalities in the classroom.

Of course, the best way to demonstrate the legitimacy of Christmas is to give evidence of Christ within you. "Always . . . make your defence with gentleness and respect" 1 Peter 3:15 (gwt). A very blessed Christmas to you all.

Litany

Ordinary Objects and Advent Awe

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

A lump of clay, wooden blocks, binoculars, a dictionary, a shovel, a coat, and canned food – do these objects readily come to mind when you reflect on Christmas?

Probably not.

Christmas typically conjures up other things in our minds: Christmas trees, a creche, lights, candles, and stars. Sometimes, because we and our children are so used to these Christmas objects, they no longer create a sense of Advent awe in us. Parents can help their kids hear the Christmas story in fresh ways by reading the following short, simple scripts, which use ordinary objects to illustrate biblical truths.

1. The Angel Comes to Mary

(Mary holds a lump of clay in one hand. Her other hand is empty.)

Mary: I'm Mary, and guess what happened to me? An angel came to me. He said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." I was astounded, troubled, and frightened, but he told me not to be afraid.

(Mary begins to knead the clay.)

Mary: And then he said the most earth-shaking thing that you can imagine. He said that I will give birth to Jesus, the Son of God! Imagine that! I'm just an ordinary teenager. See, I'm human just like you are. Touch my hand.

(Mary extends her empty hand for the children to touch.)

Mary: God chose to work through me, an ordinary person. Do you see this lump of clay in my hand? God is the Potter and I am the clay in his hands. He's shaping me for his purposes. I told the angel I wanted to be shaped. I said, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." God is shaping your hearts and lives, too.

(Mary gives each of the children a chance to knead the clay, while she talks to them about ways God is shaping their lives.)

2. The Angel Comes to Joseph

(A box of large wooden blocks rests on a chair beside Joseph. One at a time, he takes the blocks out of the box and slowly stacks them on the table in front of him as he tells his story.)

Joseph: I am Joseph. Mary and I were engaged to be married. But before we married, Mary became pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because I am a righteous man, I didn't want to shame her and allow people to mock her. So, I decided to quietly divorce her.

(Joseph pauses. He takes out one more block from the box and sets it in top of all the other blocks.)

Joseph: That's how everything stacked up in my mind. *(Suddenly, Joseph knocks the blocks over.)*

Joseph: But, guess what! That's not how things stacked up in God's mind. God had a different plan.

(Joseph picks up the blocks and puts them back in the box. As he tells the rest of his story he builds another block tower, shaped differently from the first one to portray the difference between how things stacked up in his mind and how they stacked up in God's mind.)

Joseph: God sent an angel to me in a dream. He told me not to be afraid to take Mary home as my wife because the child she was pregnant with was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The angel told me that Mary would give birth to a son and, when he was born, I was to name him Jesus because he would save his people from their sins.

(Joseph pauses so the children have a chance to reflect on what he is saying.)

Joseph: That's how things stacked up in God's mind

and plan. When I woke up from my dream, I obeyed God. I took Mary home as my wife. When she gave birth to a son, I named him Jesus.



3. The Shepherds Meet Jesus

(A shepherd has a pair of binoculars around his neck.)

Shepherd: I am a shepherd, an ordinary man. I was there when the angel announced the birth of Jesus. If you had been watching the scene from a distant hill through these binoculars, this is what you would have seen.

(The shepherd puts the binoculars up to his eyes and peers straight ahead.)

Shepherd: You would have seen a bunch of tattered shepherds with me out in a field watching over our sheep. It was a calm night. Not much was happening.

(The shepherd takes the binoculars away from his eyes.)

Shepherd: But it didn't remain that way.

(The shepherd puts the binoculars up to his eyes and looks straight ahead. Suddenly, he throws back his head and peers up.)

Shepherd: Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared to us! Magnificent! Shimmering glory! If you had been watching the scene through these binoculars, you would have seen the other shepherds and me fall to the ground in terror. A few moments later, you would have seen a whole group of angels appear in the sky. Brilliant! Amazing!

(The shepherd again removes the binoculars from his eyes.)

Shepherd: What you would have seen through these binoculars was spectacular, but another amazing happened – something that you couldn't see with binoculars.

(The shepherd pauses so the children can reflect on this thought.)

Shepherd: Something happened inside my heart and in the hearts of the other shepherds. Even though you couldn't see it with the binoculars, what happened in our hearts was just as real as the angels in the sky. That night our hearts were changed. When we ran to Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby in the manger, we knew our Savior had come. Our hearts were filled with joy. We didn't stay there, though. We spread the good news about him. The amazing thing was that people listened to us. Usually they disliked us because we were rough men, but when we spread the joyful gospel, they listened.

4. The Magi Visit Jesus

(One of the Magi holds a large, hard-cover dictionary that could possibly be mistaken for a Bible.)

Wise man: I am a wise man, one of the Magi who followed the star to Bethlehem.

(He holds up the dictionary.)

Wise man: What is this book?

(The children respond.)

Wise man: It's a dictionary. What's a dictionary?

(The children respond.)

Wise man: That's right! It's a book that lists words in alphabetical order and gives their meanings. Hundreds and thousands of words.

(He sets the dictionary aside.)

Wise man: When we traveled to Bethlehem, one Word was revealed to the other Magi and me. But it wasn't revealed to us in one way. It was revealed to us in three ways. Do you know what that Word was?

(The children respond.)

Wise man: It was the Word of God. Does anyone remember what we followed in order to find our way to Bethlehem?

(The children respond.)

Wise man: That's right! A star! How can a star be the Word of God?

(The children respond.)

Wise man: From the beginning God spoke his Word to people through creation. And he spoke to us through the star, a part of his creation. Creation is a word from God.

When we arrived in Jerusalem on our way to Bethlehem, we asked, "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?" We told people that we'd seen his star in the East and had come to worship him. King Herod was very upset. When he called the religious leaders together, he asked where the Christ was to be born. Do you know how the religious leaders answered?

(The children respond.)

Wise man: They answered from the Word of Scripture: Christ would be born in Bethlehem. Scripture is a Word from God.

When we finally arrived in Bethlehem at the house where Jesus and Mary were staying, we bowed down and worshiped Jesus. Do you realize that Jesus is the Word made flesh? There in the manger I saw Jesus, the Word in its fullness! And I worshiped him!

(He picks up the dictionary again.)

Wise man: This book is full of thousands of words. But this Christmas, we celebrate the one Word. And we're going to celebrate Him forever.

5. John the Baptist Prepares the Way of the Lord

(John the Baptist has a shovel and a bag, filled with cans of food and a coat, beside him.)

Litany

John: I'm John the Baptist, and I'm working on a road fit for a king. When I meet people, I call out:

"Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God's salvation."

(John pauses.)

John: Do any of you know who I'm getting the road ready for? Do you know the name of the king I'm preparing the road for?

(The children respond. When they realize that he's preparing the road for Jesus, John takes the shovel and continues to speak.)

John: Is this the kind of tool I need to build a road that leads to Jesus? Do you think the road I'm preparing for Jesus is made of mud, or stones, or gravel, or asphalt? Or is it a different kind of road? *(The children respond.)*

John: So, I don't really need this shovel, do I?

(John sets the shovel aside.)

John: The road I'm preparing for Jesus is called Repentance Road. Do you know what repentance means?

(The children respond.)

John: That's right. Repentance means that we are sorry for our sins and we want Jesus to wash us clean. And it means that then we want to live for him. When I talked to the people of my day about repentance, they asked me what they should do.

(John takes a coat out of the bag.)

John: I told them that the person who owns two coats should share one with someone who has none.

(John takes cans of food out of the bag.)

John: And I told the people to share their food with the hungry. I told other people to stop cheating and to be content with what they have.

Each time you've told a story, leave the object you used to illustrate it in a prominent place for the remainder of the Advent season. The lump of clay, the wooden blocks, the binoculars, the dictionary, the shovel, the coat, and the canned food will remind your children of Jesus' amazing birth and of how God used ordinary people to fulfil his purposes.

The mystery of Christ's descent among us



Tympanum of the south portal of St. Pierre, Moissac, c. 1115-35

A meditation on Philippians 2:6-11

Pope John Paul II

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

⁷but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This Pauline hymn is certainly one of the most significant songs in Scripture and of great theological wealth. It is inserted in the second chapter of St. Paul's Letter to the Christians of Philippi, the Greek city that was the first stage of the apostle's missionary proclamation in Europe. The canticle retains expressions of the Christian liturgy of the early days and it is a joy for our generation to be able to be associated, after two millennia, with the prayer of the apostolic Church.

The canticle reveals a double vertical movement, first of descent and then of ascent. On the one hand there is the humbling descent of the Son of God when, in the Incarnation, he is made man out of love for men. He falls into "kenosis," that is, into an "emptying" of his divine glory, which leads to death on the cross, the punishment of slaves that made him the last of men, making him a real brother of suffering humanity, sinful and rejected.

On the other hand, we behold the triumphal ascent that takes place at Easter when Christ is re-established by the Father in the splendor of divinity and is celebrated as Lord of the whole cosmos and of all men now redeemed. We stand before a grandiose re-reading of the mystery of Christ, especially the paschal mystery. St.

Paul, in addition to proclaiming the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-5), also defines Christ's Passion as "exaltation," "raising," "glorification."

So from the luminous horizon of the divine transcendence the Son of God has crossed the infinite distance that lies between the Creator and the creature. He did not cling to his "being equal to God," which corresponds to him by nature and not by usurpation. He did not wish to jealously preserve this prerogative as a treasure or to use it for his own advantage. Instead, Christ "emptied," "humbled" himself and appeared poor, weak, destined to the infamous death of crucifixion. Precisely from this extreme humiliation stems the great movement of ascent described in the second part of the Pauline hymn (v. 2:9-11).

God now "exalts" his Son conferring on him a glorious "name" which, in biblical language, indicates the person himself and his dignity. This name is "Kyrios," "Lord," the sacred name of the God of the Bible, now applied to the risen Christ. This casts the universe, described according to the three-part division of heaven, earth and hell, in the attitude of adoration.

So the glorious Christ appears, at the end of the hymn, as the "Pantokrator," that is, the omnipotent Lord who thunders triumphantly in the apses of the paleo-Christian and Byzantine basilicas. He still bears the signs of the Passion, namely, of his true humanity, but he now reveals himself in the splendor of divinity. Close to us in suffering and in death, Christ now attracts us to himself in glory, blessing us and making us participants in his eternity.

We conclude our reflection on the Pauline hymn with the words of St. Ambrose, who often takes up the image of Christ who "stripped himself of his rank," humbling himself, as though annihilating himself in the incarnation and in the sacrificing of himself on the cross.

In particular, in the Commentary on Psalm 118, the bishop of Milan says thus: "Christ, hanging from the tree of the cross ... was pierced by the lance and there gushed forth blood and water sweeter than any unguent, a victim pleasing to God, spreading throughout the world the perfume of sanctification.... Now Jesus, pierced, spread the perfume of forgiveness of sins and of redemption. In fact, by becoming man, as Word he imposed limitations on himself. Though he was rich, he became poor for our sake, so that by his poverty we might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9). He was powerful, but he appeared as someone miserable, so much so that Herod scorned and derided him. He could shake the earth; yet he remained attached to that tree. He could cover the sky in darkness, crucify the world; yet he was crucified. He bowed his head, and yet the Word came forth. He was annihilated; yet he filled everything. God descended, and man was raised; the Word became flesh so that the flesh could claim for itself the throne of the Word at the right hand of God; he became one big wound, yet unguent flowed from him, he seemed ignoble, and yet he was God" (III, 8 "Saemo IX," Milan-Rome, 1987, pp. 131.133).

This translation of John Paul II's address given Nov. 19, 2003, dedicated to Paul's canticle in Philippians 2:6-11 was provided by Zenit.com.

Christmas Memories

Memories of a west-coast Christmas in wartime

Sophie (Golhof) Ensing

The fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II has brought back many memories. Here are some of my Christmas war time memories in Vancouver, where my parents, Casper and Ferdinanda Golhof settled after first emigrating to Granum, Alberta in the 1920's.

Winters in the early 1940's were bleak for most people, especially for those with large families. All across the country people were pitching in for the war effort, and as kids we knew that.

On the West Coast, where the largest buildings in our city were the Sun Tower on Cambie and the Marine Building on Burrard, there were air raid sirens, black-outs, ARP wardens, and air raid drills at school. School children were taught how to lie down in the school grounds "with mouth open and arm covering the face." Citizens were told to make blackout curtains for their windows. Shades were even put on lamp posts and car headlights for the few cars on the road to keep the light down. Oh, and gasoline was scarce.

People grew Victory Gardens since much food was canned to be sent abroad. Some people built air raid shelters in their back yards. Japanese subs were spotted along our BC coast as close as Howe Sound and Estevan Point, and the politicians were becoming frantic. Gun docks were being built in Stanley Park and at Spanish Banks

beach as well as at Lighthouse Park. When we heard that our close Japanese neighbors had suddenly been shipped away, I remember that mama gasped.

Each family member received a ration book for tea, coffee, butter, sugar, meat and chocolate. Substitutes were produced for peanut butter and also for coffee (Postum) — from soy beans, and mama began using them too.

Our way of life was now geared to helping the Allies win the war, so children in school were put to work making bandages and Q-tips for the Red Cross, and rolling the tin foil from cigarettes packs and candy into balls. It became kind of a game to find tin foil in the street litter. These we brought with mom's old aluminum pots to our school depot. I often wondered at its use. In 1999 I learned that the Allies used it while flying low over Germany. It was shredded and dropped to confuse enemy radar.

Large posters with 'Help Win the War ... Buy War Savings Bonds' were everywhere and mom bought bonds for each of our family. Women knitted blankets, and baked fruit cakes using recipes printed and reprinted in our local papers "for the poor soldier boys." Uniformed servicemen were seen everywhere in the city, too. Among them were boys from southern Alberta whom my parents knew, and they visited our home.

Papa and mama tried new ways to earn more wages for our growing family. This is how it came about that we moved into one of those large Tudor-style homes called "CPR" or "Railroad houses" on Vancouver Heights. We were the caretakers now, they thought, so we would have a good income from the tenants occupying the eight suites. But it didn't turn out that way. The furnace was never satisfied with the sawdust and later with the wood and coal that we fed into its hungry mouth.



Cambie Street in the 1940's

By this time my dad worked night shift at the shipyards in North Van, and we saw less of him. I did not yet know the doctor's news that my fun loving teen-age sister had been diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease.

In this new neighborhood the activities surrounding our family were so much fun. The house and the spacious yard had plenty of exciting corners for all of us. We were quite a group — Christine, Nanda, Corrie, Casper, Willemina, Annie and Sophie, and cousin Billy — and we all knew this cozy place as our wonderful home. Christmas time especially brings back fond memories of this big brown and white house on Yale Street above pretty Burrard Inlet.

Snow didn't come every winter, and when it did, it didn't hang around. So when the first snow did come, there was excitement in that big house. From somewhere indoors voices called out "It's snowing! It's snowing!" First one voice, then another, and another. Soon after, the back door slammed several times ... and all was quiet inside.

We had an excellent hill for sliding, and with neighbor kids coming to play we were having good fun. We had piles of fun and laughter in the snow! Out on our "field" we'd make snowmen or snow forts, play snowballs, do angels, or play snow tag, with a design of paths all over the field.

We'd go out again after supper and it was hard to come in when called. But mama didn't mind even in the dark. She knew where we were and there were many of us. It was safe.

Our house looked so wonderful in the snow with its tall evergreens and other trees. Sometimes I just sat on the bench in our front bay window watching the snowflakes coming down. It was like "there was an endless shaking-out of white feather pillows in the sky" — as the poem said, that we knew from our Highroads to Reading book at school.

I don't know how it came about that we didn't or couldn't buy a tree, but one day my brother, axe in hand, called for anyone to join him and some neighbor kids to find a tree up on Capitol Hill (not the one in Ottawa). It was quite a walk in the snow, but we did find one.

We returned home before dark along the sparsely housed streets. What a procession we made! Our gang, dragging our treasured fir trees, laughing and shouting the long way home as kids do, with Trixie, our black Spaniel excitedly bounding and barking around us. He was enjoying this trek to the woods too, this adventure in the snow.

Once indoors the tree was put up. Decorations were the usual — tinsel, balls, strings of popcorn and paper chains. Mama hung evergreen boughs over doorways and sills and behind framed wall pictures. I just loved the wonderful outdoor scent these brought into the house.

And those Japanese oranges! Mama came home with them and soon we were allowed to sample them. It was probably my uncle John who brought the Ribbon Candy — curls of wide, striped candy several inches long, just like ribbon. (I can find them still, if I look for them.) Sometimes we had 'melt-a-ways' from Spencers. We could each have one.

At Christmas time it was crowded in the city. People in greater Vancouver shopped there, right downtown. Malls weren't invented yet. Once we went with the whole family to the city, all the way by streetcar. It was special just to be there, to see the lighted streets and decorated shops, and to hear the cathedral chimes and bells, and listen to department staff choirs singing carols.

At the sound of the Salvation Army band on the Abbott-Hastings street corner, papa would stop for all of us to listen. His thoughts must have taken him back to Rotterdam's street corners where he sang in a small choir.

David Spencer and Woodward, two department stores, had display windows every year with mechanically operated scenes: cheeky woodland animals, or Santa's workshop, Charles Dickens scenes, or the lovely Nativities. It was sheer delight for us as we stood there among the crowd and watched it all in motion. My eyes were filled with wonder.

Before we left for home, papa and mama would treat us at The White Lunch across from Woodward, where we stood in line at a buffet counter, full of desserts on individual plates. I can still see all those cream puffs, and pies, and fancy things with berries or apricots on top. Papa bent down close to my level, and I hear him saying, "Take one, Sophie, any one! Which one do you want?" It was an eye-level decision. There were so many, but only one choice. Sitting all of us together in a booth, I savored this moment; it was rare, it was heavenly.

At last it was Christmas Eve. After supper, our extended family gathered in the cosy living room, most of us sitting on the floor close to the tree with its brightly wrapped presents under it. In the light of the glimmering tree, we sang a few carols, harmonizing especially on "Silent Night." And as usual, mama started all over again, this time in the Dutch version, "Stille nacht, heilige nacht, David's zoon, lang verwacht..." We felt good as we sang, searching one another's faces for the words. My child-heart felt rich and warm inside knowing that over the whole modern world, na-

See Memories p. 23



Second World War Victory Garden Poster

Poem

On the night before Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas
When all through the house
Not a creature was stirring
Except for the mouse.

He ran cross the rafters
And down through the wall
Into the kitchen
To eat the cheese ball.

He had heard the commotion
Throughout the whole day
The excitement of children
Anticipating Santa and his sleigh.

They wondered how Santa
Their much-loved king
Could bring gifts large and small
Through ten inch piping.

But for now they lay sleeping
In their warm, cozy beds
While mother gave voice
To the thoughts in her head.

"The turkey's been stuffed
The presents are wrapped
Christmas commercialized
Has me feeling quite zapped."

As she gazed out the window
Into the dark night
A chorus of angels
Made her step back in fright.

They sang of a baby
Born long ago
"This life-giving Jesus
Will bring you great joy."

"Peace on the earth
Goodwill to all men
Jesus of Nazareth
Has called you His friend."

She recalled as a young child
Singing O Holy Night
The Christmas carol
Brought back memories of delight.

"When did the truth
About Christ's birth disappear
Into turkeys, and presents
And old Santa cheer?"

And then he heard her singing
The familiar song of old
"God Himself is with us
Let us now adore Him
And with awe appear
Before Him"

"Like the holy angels
Who beheld His glory
May we ceaselessly
Adore Him."

Merry Christmas to all
And to all a good night.

Irene VanderSprit

Memories ... continued from p. 22

tions were stopping to celebrate this event, our Savior's birth!

On Christmas Eve it was a family tradition to open our presents one at a time. The gifts were practical – gloves, scarves, slippers ... underwear? One year Nanda gave me a surprise: a box of colored paper shapes with construction paper for creative hands – circles, triangles, squares, all in bright colors. When I think about it now, it doesn't sound special, but really it was.

Before we went off to bed, mama asked each of us, "Ben je te vrede?" (Are you happy?) Then, "Do you want to lay your socks under the tree?"

We did. Next morning we noticed big bulges in them. It was mama's trick; she made them look fuller by squeezing in a potato, carrot or onion along with the nuts, candies and orange. Funny mama! You may have guessed that years later I made this a tradition, too.

Christmas was a day filled with friendship, singing, and good simple food. That morning we worshiped in our little church on Adanac street, and after a lunch at home we hurried back all that way again for the Christmas concert. It was a long way to church; first, a mile's walk along Boundary Road, then a long streetcar ride, then five blocks more to walk. For us the concert

was the highlight of the year, and we wore the velvet dresses that our cousins wore in Holland before the War.

The program focused on Jesus, Immanuel, God come down to earth. I loved the song, 'Come, and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King!' And, yes, we did sing the well known angels' song 'Ere Zij God', too. I could hear my dad's voice as he sang the tenor lines all the way through, and mama had a lovely soprano voice. I loved that.

For the children this was a time of excitement, singing much-rehearsed songs and reciting poems before a sea of familiar faces. There were waves of recognition and there were children who twitched nervously while reciting. The teenagers always had a short play and the Young People sang carols – a new one was 'O Holy Night.' Then lastly, the professor's wife, Mrs. Besselaar, was invited up on the stage to tell a story, which she did so well. I loved this part. The story was about children, set in the English countryside.

One time Nanda got two of us to sing an old carol, rarely heard today as a duet: 'Sleep Holy Babe / upon thy mother's breast / Great Lord of earth, and sea and sky / how great it is to see thee lie / In such a place as this.' Nanda told

us not to mind the people, "Just think of the words you sing."

After the story-telling, the concert was all over. The children were treated to a drink of hot cocoa, a bag with nuts, candy and a Japanese orange. Lastly we were given a nice storybook. By this time the sky was getting dark.

Before leaving for home, we shouted "Merry Christmas!" to all and headed for the Hastings streetcar, the old No. 14 that would take us home.

We felt happy, and as our family walked together in the darkness those long blocks at the end of the line, we knew we'd soon be by the fire in our wonderful, wonderful home on Vancouver Heights.

The brown and white Tudor style home is still there at 3870 Yale Street, with its hill in the front and the stone wall close to the road, to remind us of good times gone by. Also still there are the corner of tall evergreens and English ivy gracing the property. But where the big field used to be, other homes have been built. Our field is gone, so we shall just have to



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Opinion



Yes... but

Bert Hielema

Martin, St. Martin and Black Friday

Paul Martin. I saw him, not in person, of course, but on TV, when he and Chretien met over coffee. I wasn't impressed with either Chretien, who was rude, or Martin who looked more like a schoolboy called on the carpet than our next P.M.

There also is a Saint Martin. In Groningen, the Netherlands, where I grew up, November 11 was St. Martin's day. St. Martin is the patron saint of France, who in the year 357, while, serving in the Roman army, gave away his cloak to a beggar and so became a saint and a worker of miracles.

A good portrayal of Paul Martin? On St. Martin's day, we as kids expected a hand-out, as we would go out with candle-lit paper lanterns – which would often go up on flames – and have the equivalent of Halloween, except we were obliged to sing a song before we would get a candy or apple or a penny – quite a treasure in those days. I remember the song, which goes, roughly translated:

"Saint Martinus, Bishop, Glory of the nation
That we come with little lights,
earns no condemnation.
Here lives a wealthy male,
who'll give some without fail:
give an apple or a pear,
won't be back for a whole year.
That whole year will last as long
as my little light stays on."

We also had a song for those who gave nothing: "Here lives Mister Penny-pinch
whom we are about to lynch."

What will Paul Martin be? Generous as his saintly namesake or a Mister Penny-Pinch? If we can believe the press, then we now have a modern St. Martin, who has promised more aid to the cities, more money for health care, more help for wage earners by reducing the tax burden, who will clean up the environment and do whatever is needed to be at peace with the provinces, with the USA and with the world. Utopia regained. A true saint if all this comes to pass, and a true miracle worker as well.

Who is this man? He is a devoted Catholic. Goes each Sunday to mass, no matter where he finds himself. A confessing Christian. I see that as a plus, even though, in spite of papal disapproval, he spoke in favor of same-sex marriages. My experiences with good Catholics is that they have great regard for the disadvantaged and are socially conscious. So this bodes well for Canada.

Another good omen is Martin's long time friend: Maurice Strong. "Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are" is a true saying. I like Maurice Strong. He was instrumental in setting Paul Martin on the road to riches. As president of Montreal's Power Corporation, and a good friend of Papa Martin, a longtime Liberal Cabinet

member – and also with prime ministerial aspirations – Strong appointed the young Martin as his executive assistant, and so kick-started his business career.

Basically penniless, but, due to his new connections, Martin was able to buy Canada Steamship Lines, now the source of his great wealth. Here's what I like about Maurice Strong: he was the moving spirit behind, and chaired the first Earth Summit in 1992, sponsored by the U.N. There in Rio de Janeiro 10,000 people, among which most heads of State – but not Father Bush – vowed to make the Environment the world's priority. Let's hope that Martin at least will make that his goal.

Maurice Strong, by the way, has bought a condo in Ottawa, to be close to his successful student in case he needs some fatherly advice. We have seen in Chretien how powerful a Prime Minister can be. It seems to me that Mr. Martin will be more reluctant to use that power. In some ways he strikes me as a compromiser – not a bad thing in itself, of course. It is no secret that Jean Chretien sees Martin as a softy, not able to bulldoze his way through as he himself so often did.

Will power corrupt Martin as it did corrupt Jean Chretien, who thought himself to be above the law? Chretien reminds me of Lyndon Johnson, a former US president, who also retired very reluctantly and was a life-long politician like Chretien. Johnson smoked himself to death at his ranch in Texas, incapable of shaping a new life for himself.

Has Chretien, who is off to Nigeria soon, in his last official function representing our country at the meeting of the Commonwealth nations, prepared himself for retirement? Predictions?

Both *Time Magazine* and *Walrus* devoted major articles to Martin. *Walrus* is somewhat sceptical of his left-leaning priorities, given his solid membership in the corporate elite. *Time* is more non-committal, but questions whether the relationship with the USA would change drastically, given the growing difference in philosophical outlook between a conservative USA and a much more liberal Canada, with its gay marriage approval and legalization of marijuana, as well as its much more Western European outlook on military conflicts such as Iraq.

We will soon know. He will probably plead budget problems, as Dalton McGuinty is doing now to renege on his billion dollar promises. I repeat: Never trust a politician's promises.

When you read this I have been in never-never land, also known as Beverly Hills, where nobody ever grows old, where tomorrow never arrives, where the supply of food never runs out, where the people who do

the dirty work never legally entered the state, where the trees never lose their leaves, where the stores never close, where all cars are new and all people are good-looking.

I am here in never-never land, where most people believe in heaven and hell and an afterlife, but where nobody ever goes to the bad place. A recent national poll tells me that Americans believe that almost all will end up in heaven – migrate directly from Beverly Hills on earth to Beverly Hills in the sky. After all, the vast majority live decent lives, give to the charity of their choice, liberally support the religious institution they favor and give the odd pedestrian a brake.

The odd ones being my wife and I, who were the only walkers I spotted during the week we spent in that glorious place, except for Saturday, Sabbath, when a goodly number of Jewish men and women walked to their respective synagogues. I counted about 15 different Jewish worship places in the area we stayed. We even attended a service in one of them on Saturday morning last week, attracted to the sign: Messianic Synagogue. But that is another story: I will tell you that the entire service lasted almost 3 hours.

We were in California during the American Thanksgiving week. It used to be that this holiday of all holidays was established to have that one meal in the year where enough would not be enough, where the sluice gates of the stomach were thrown open without reserve, where, after a year of economy and thrift, all holds were unbarred and even exotic foods, like bananas or oranges or a peach, perhaps, would find its way to a copious table.

Now every day is a feast day. Oranges come in a dozen varieties. If we want strawberries in December, we get them from South America. Grapes in the spring? South Africa will fly them in at no extra cost, that is not for our generation. Just imagine the calories used to bring them to our table. Because labor is costly, only big farms with thousands of acres can afford

the gigantic harvest machines. Never mind the pesticides used, the soil eroded, the energy wasted – fuel is cheap – and the airplane exhaust: the air is infinite, the danger to the globe will not affect our lifestyle. At least not until tomorrow. And Tomorrow never comes. Carpe diem: live for Today.

It occurred to me that perhaps the best

way to celebrate Thanksgiving is to fast: to dedicate one day per year to those in the world who have not enough to eat – I read last week that hunger has increased last year.

I used to fast one day per week. Not eat anything at all. Now that I am old(er) and my energy level calls for more frequent, but smaller meals, I don't do that anymore. Yet statistics indicate that people who eat less live longer, something I – and most people I presume – have as a goal, a religious goal even, because we have been created to live and must treat our bodies with the utmost care.

During the war of 1940-45 in the Netherlands, when food was scarce, sugar was strictly rationed, tobacco only available on the black market at exorbitant prices, and strictly enforced curfews (from 8 p.m. till 6 a.m. during the last year of the war), families were forced to be together and socialize and play games. So kids were healthier and happier than at any time since.

Don't get me going on the day after Thanksgiving, now apparently known here as Black Friday, the biggest shopping day of the year. That despicable instrument, US television, showed people pushing and fighting to get into the stores at 5 a.m. to do what the American religion demands: shop till they drop. Never mind tomorrow. Ingrained in the American psyche is the Great Depression, caused by people stopping to buy, because tomorrow would see lower prices.

Black Friday. Why black? With bank balances in the red, red is the dominating color in America. Budgets, state-wise and nationally, are in the red. The balance of trade too – deeply so. With American blood being spilled in Iraq and Afghanistan, red Friday would be more appropriate. But then, that would reveal too much of the true nature of society.

Bert Hielema lives in
Tweed, Ontario.



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Classifieds

Classified Rates	Anniversaries	
<p>DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION <i>Christian Courier</i> is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date.</p> <p>RATES (GST added to all rates listed) All personal and family announcements: \$16.00 per column inch (P.I.) (2" wide) rose@christiancourier.ca Display advertising re. businesses and organizations: \$18.20 P.I. ads@christiancourier.ca</p> <p>PHOTOS: There is a processing fee of \$25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged P.I., but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. We need either an original photo (which we will return) or a downloadable internet image.</p> <p>PERSONAL ADS <i>Christian Courier</i> would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is \$25. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at \$16 P.I. per insertion. All correspondence is immediately forwarded unopened.</p> <p>NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS We offer a \$25 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in <i>Christian Courier</i> and to parents who announce a child's birth in our paper. If you want to take advantage of this offer, please let us know when placing your ad.</p> <p>SUBMITTING YOUR AD Mail: <i>Christian Courier</i> 1 Hiscott St. St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7 fax: 905-682-8313 e-mail: see above</p> <p>OTHER INFORMATION a) <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format and editing style. b) Please provide us with clear copy. <i>Christian Courier</i> is not responsible for any errors due to hand written or phoned-in advertisements.</p>	<p>1953 December 22 2003</p> <p>With praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, who gave them all these years together,</p> <p>RIEN AND MINNIE VAN STRIEN (nee DeJonge)</p> <p>hope to celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary D.V. on December 20, 2003 with their family and friends.</p> <p>Open House in the Calvin C.R.C. of Dundas, 420 - Hwy 5, from 3-5 p.m.</p> <p>Home address: 1121 Edgewood Rd. Millgrove ON LOR 1V0</p> <hr/> <p>1958 December 27 2003</p> <p>"For the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations." Psalm 100:5</p> <p>SENSE (Stan) AND CORNELIA (Corrie) DE JONG (nee Smit)</p> <p>will, D.V. celebrate their 45th Wedding Anniversary.</p> <p>Congratulations with love from your children, grandchildren & great-grandchildren:</p> <p>Dave & Anita Sikkema, <i>Vineland, ON</i> Marc & Christine Radsma, <i>St. Catharines, ON</i> Marshall, Michaela, Isaac David & Andrea, <i>St. Catharines, ON</i> Joshua Johannes, <i>Fresno State, CA</i> James & Evelina, <i>Thorold, ON</i> S. Mitchell, <i>Sheridan College, ON</i> John & Wynne Watt, <i>Toronto, ON</i> Samuel Kevin & Heather de Jong, <i>Owen Sound, ON</i> Rachel, Zachary, Ethan Paul & Nycole de Jong, <i>Calgary, AB</i> Natasha Home address: 204-99A Scott Street St. Catharines, ON L2N 1G8</p>	<p>Andijk Noordscharwoude Medoc The Netherlands Canada 1953 Dec. 17 2003</p> <p>Proverbs 3:5</p> <p>NORM AND MARY GROOT (nee Ootjers)</p> <p>and their family are happy to celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary.</p> <p>Alida & Clark Moffatt, <i>Kingston</i> Elena Arthur & Carey Groot, <i>Sault Ste Marie</i> Emily, Heather Nancy & Ted Lichacz, <i>Pontypool</i> Rachel, Teresa Peter Groot, <i>Barrie</i> Brian & Kim Groot, <i>Indian River</i> Meghan, James</p> <p>An Open House will be held Saturday, Dec. 20 from 2 - 4 p.m. at Maranatha C.R. Church 72 Orchard Drive, Belleville</p> <p>Home address: 664 Ray Rd, RR 5 Madoc ON K0K 2K0</p> <hr/> <p>1953 December 3 2003</p> <p>With thankfulness to God for all of His blessings, we wish to announce the 50th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents</p> <p>GERTRUDE (Jansen) AND JOHN DE JONG</p> <p>With love and congratulations,</p> <p>Helen & Bill Ophhof, <i>Grimsby, ON</i> Chris & Shay Kort, Dave, Suzanne & Megan Kort, Shawna Kort</p> <p>Joanne & Rob DeJonge, <i>Grimsby, ON</i> Cheryl & Dan, Jennifer, Chuck & Morgan, Diane</p> <p>Steve & Deborah De Jong, <i>Brampton, ON</i> Sierra, Zachary</p> <p>Tom De Jong, <i>Mission, BC</i></p> <p>Sandra & Bill Haan, <i>Brampton, ON</i> Dana, Richard</p> <p>Sharon & Steve Stafford, <i>Grimsby, ON</i> Cassidy, Madison</p> <p>Address: Gertrude & John De Jong 20 Red Haven Dr Unit 3 Grimsby ON L3M 5K1</p>
<p>For rent</p> <p>Ft. Lauderdale FL. 2BR, 2BA lovely Condo on pond, large pool, tennis, exercise room. 7 miles from beach. Dec 23 - Jan 3, Jan 7 - Feb 11, Mar 26 - April 14 US \$ 500/w Tel. 954 / 968-4386</p> <hr/> <p>For Sale</p> <p>Johannes Organ - 2 manual, 32 note pedalboard, 41 stops. Excellent condition. \$1200.00 Phone: 613-966-0388</p>	<p>1943 Hoogeveen December 15 Brampton 2003</p> <p>"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help...." Psalm 46:1</p> <p>With thanksgiving to God, we hope to celebrate the 60th Wedding Anniversary of</p> <p>JANETTE (nee Feddema) AND REMKES KOOISTRA</p> <p>Love and congratulations from your children: Dorothy & John Krait, <i>Ottawa, ON</i> Jacky & Theo VandePutte, <i>Brantford, ON</i> Clarence Kooistra, <i>Vernon, BC</i> John & Gail Kooistra, <i>Acme, AB</i> grandchildren & great-grandchildren</p> <p>Address: Hope #404 - 7900 McLaughlin Rd Brampton ON L6Y 5A7</p> <p>The Rev. Dr. Remkes Kooistra is also celebrating 60 Years of Service as a minister of the Gospel.</p>	<p>1958 December 26 2003</p> <p>With thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for His care and faithfulness, we are pleased to announce the 45th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents,</p> <p>NEIL AND ALICE BAKELAAR (nee Greidanus)</p> <p>"The one who calls you is Faithful and He will do it." 1 Thess. 5:24</p> <p>Congratulations Dad and Mom, Opa and Beppe!</p> <p>With love from your children and grandchildren: Adrian & Maria, <i>Exeter</i> Nathaniel, Alicia, Melissa, Katelyn John & Wilma, <i>Trenton</i> Lawrence, Sara, Bethany, Jenna Tim & Karen, <i>Listowel</i> Jared, Graham, Rodney, Alex Derek & Sharon, <i>Exeter</i> Matthew, Kristen, Kara</p> <p>Home address: 510 Boyne Ave S Listowel ON N4W 3V6</p>
<p>Anniversary</p> <p>1943 December 28 2003</p> <p>Pastor JIM AND ADRIANA VAN WEELDEN (nee De Wolf)</p> <p>thanks to our gracious heavenly Father hope to celebrate with children, grandchildren, and friends their 60th with an</p> <p>Open House Monday, Dec. 29 from 2 - 5 p.m. in Mountainview CRC Church, Grimsby.</p> <p>Home address: 30 - 10 Wentworth Dr Grimsby ON L3M 5G3</p>	 <p>With thankful hearts to God the Council of Brampton Second Christian Reformed Church congratulates</p> <p>Rev. & Mrs. Remkes and Janette Kooistra</p> <p>Open House will be held Saturday, December 13 from 3 - 5 p.m. at Horizon Hall (King Tower) Holland Christian Homes 7900 McLaughlin Rd, Brampton ON</p> <p>Rev. Kooistra will preach in a commemorative service on Sunday Dec. 14 at 10 a.m. at Holland Christian Homes.</p>	

Classifieds

Obituaries

Aug. 16, 1943 Bleiswijk, The Neth.

Nov. 15, 2003 Burlington, Ont.

RAY (Reinier) VAN STAALDUINEN

It is with much sadness and sorrow that we announce the untimely and sudden death of our much beloved husband, dad, & grandpa.

The last hours of his earthly life were spent praising and giving glory to God at a "Promise Keepers" Convention along with 4000 other men at the Queensway Cathedral.

He was still in the driveway of the church when an impaired driver struck him. He went from "glory to glory."

Missing him so much are:

His wife Dina (Dianne nee Kamps) of 37 years.

His children:

Rob & Ingrid van Staalduinen - Jacob, Joseph, Hannah

Allan & Kristen van Staalduinen - Caleb, Jaimee

Michelle & David Schwarz - Olivia, Elise

Jonathan van Staalduinen

David van Staalduinen all of Burlington, ON

Dear brother of: Bill & Grace van Staalduinen, Hamilton, ON

Brian & Gerda van Staalduinen, Stoney Creek, ON

A much appreciated uncle to many nieces and nephews.

Predeceased by his parents John & Mary van Staalduinen of Stoney Creek, ON

Ray's funeral took place on Nov. 20 at the Burlington Alliance Church.

Correspondence: D. van Staalduinen, 2089 Cavendish Dr, Burlington ON L7P 1Z2

November 14, 1928

November 28, 2003



After a lengthy battle with cancer the Lord took home our beloved wife of 50 years, mother & grandmother

GER BEINTEMA (nee Roos).

She will be deeply missed by: her husband Henry,

her sons: Robert (Mary)

Andrew (Elizabeth)

and her grandchildren:

Christopher and Jessica.

Also her brothers and sisters & their families, cousins, nephews and nieces here and overseas.

We rest assured in the knowledge that she is now with her Lord and Savior.

A memorial service was held on December 2, 2003 at 2 p.m. in the Heritage Hall of Holland Christian Homes at Brampton.

Correspondence: H. Beintema H.T.#309-7900 McLaughlin Rd S Brampton L6Y 5A7

In the full assurance that she was a child of God,

MARGARETHA TENSEN (nee Kamerman)

went to her eternal home October 25, 2003

at the age of 91 years.

Predeceased by her husband

Dirk Tensen, December 6, 1977

and grandson

Robby Hellinga, July 24, 1964.

II Timothy 4:6-8

Dear mother of

Dorothy (& Charles) Hellinga

John (& Dietz) Tensen

Klaas Tensen

as well as Oma to

6 grandchildren and

14 great-grandchildren

Correspondence address:

Dorothy Hellinga,

42 Moore Park Ave

Willowdale ON M2M 1M9

June 29, 1908

Andijk, Holland

October 23, 2003

Lindsay, ON Canada

JAN (John) WILMS

The Lord took home our dear husband, father, grandfather & great-grandfather on Oct. 23, 2003 at the age of 95.

He was the beloved husband of

Grietje (Grace) Wilms (Vriend)

Loving father of: Jim & Grace Wilms

Nell & John de Boer

Winnie & John VanderBorgh

Anna & Tymen VanHalteren

Bill & Lena Wilms

John & Rijna Wilms

Richard & Cora Wilms

Predeceased by daughter Margaretha Johanna

Devoted Opa of: 33 grandchildren and

42 great-grandchildren

Predeceased by 3 brothers & 2 sisters

in the Netherlands.

The service was held on Oct. 28th in the Lindsay Christian Ref. Church.

Correspondence: Grace Wilms

364 Angeline St N Lindsay ON K9V 4R1

Job Opportunities

**Full-time Position Available:
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

SALEM CHRISTIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
announces the planned retirement
of its Executive Director, Rev. Albert Dreise,
as of May 2004

Position Purpose:

The Position of the Executive Director serves to provide leadership necessary to assure the successful operation and achievement of annual and long-term goals for Salem Christian Mental Health Association. The purpose of Salem is to support healing communities in the development of mental health care services and to provide leadership in the care and comfort of people who are emotionally distressed.

Job Description:

The position will emphasize co-ordination and program development and developing a close relationship with the support community. (see: www.salem.on.ca for details)

Qualifications:

- ▶ A vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ and His church
- ▶ Knowledge/skills normally acquired through formal education on the masters level and responsible experience in a position of leadership within a similar agency
- ▶ Experience in delivering spiritual & mental health care
- ▶ Ability to travel extensively
- ▶ Familiarity and appreciation of the Reformed faith tradition a requirement

Send applications by Jan. 15, 2004 to:

Salem Christian Mental Health Association

1 Young St., Suite 512, Hamilton, ON L8N 1T8

Fax: 905-528-3562 or E-mail: salem@salem.on.ca

No phone calls please. We thank all applicants for their interest. However, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

**THE KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

Christian University Education

PRESIDENT

The King's University College, a Christian undergraduate university in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, has initiated a search for its third President. This person of faith, vision and commitment will lead the institution into the next exciting phase of its development. The Board of Governors, through its Presidential Search Committee, seeks candidates who have a bold, biblically-shaped vision for life, who demonstrate outstanding academic leadership with the ability to foster and build on existing traditions, and who show a proven capacity for passionately promoting the institution to a variety of audiences, enhancing its prominence, visibility and financial resources.

Distinguished by its commitment to university education and research as agents of positive social transformation, the University College is devoted to an interdisciplinary curriculum that integrates faith, teaching, learning and scholarship. Faculty are highly qualified, dedicated Christians committed to academic excellence and bringing a distinctly Christian perspective into the classroom.

Founded in 1979, The King's University College currently enrolls more than 650 students, employs 80 full-time faculty and staff, and has an annual operating budget of \$8.8 million. A member of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, King's offers fully accredited three- and four- year Bachelor degrees in the arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, commerce and theology, as well as a two-year Bachelor of Education after-degree. The urban campus, spanning eight hectares, is poised for a facility expansion that will accommodate up to 1000 students. For more details on The King's University College please visit www.kingsu.ca.

The Search Committee will begin consideration of candidates in March 2004, and is seeking a highly qualified individual who can take office in the summer of 2005. Requests for information, expressions of interest, nominations, or suggestions of suitable candidates are invited. Applicants may direct a curriculum vitae, a letter of introduction and the names of three references to:

Mr. John Kamphof, Chair, Search Committee and Chair, Board of Governors
c/o The King's University College,
9125 - 50 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6B 2H3
Fax: 780-465-3534; Email: john.kamphof@kingsu.ca

In accordance with Canadian immigration requirements, this advertisement is first directed to Canadian citizens and permanent residents.

Job Opportunities / Advertising

Hamilton District Christian High School

Requires a

Vice-Principal of Students

The Board of Directors of Hamilton District Christian High School invites qualified administrators or teachers, with a minimum of 4 years teaching or related experience, to apply for the position of Vice-Principal of Students. The successful candidate will require the following attributes:

- A clear understanding of and a passion for a transformational vision of Christian Education
- A heartfelt desire to bring the lordship of Jesus Christ to all areas of life
- A commitment to demonstrate servant leadership with a large dedicated staff and an established administrative team
- Excellent communication, organizational, and team building skills
- Strong interpersonal and relationship skills with young people
- A consistent, loving, restorative justice approach to discipline

Interested candidates should address letters of application, resumes and/or questions to:

George Van Kampen, Principal
Hamilton District Christian High School
92 Glancaster Rd, Ancaster, ON, L9G 3K9
Telephone: 905-648-6655
Email: gvankampen@hdch.org

For further information please see our web site, www.hdch.org.

Application deadline: Jan. 15, 2004

YOUTH DIRECTOR/PASTOR

The three Christian Reformed Churches of Sarnia, Ontario are seeking a **full time Youth Director/Pastor** to continue a unique and exciting combined youth ministry. Solid programming & committed volunteer leadership is already in place. Candidate must have strong relational and administrative skills plus the desire and ability to lead and equip our youth, helping them to grow in faith and service to our Lord. Please send resume and inquiries to:

Art Capelle
2261 Confederation
Sarnia ON N7T-7H3
Ph: 519-337-4660 Email: artc@rivernet.net

YOUTH DIRECTOR/HALF TIME:

Wanted, a loyal servant, who is gifted in youth ministries and whose love for God and His people is present in his/her everyday walk. This self-motivated and enthusiastic person will use his/her gifts to direct, lead and motivate today's young people into tomorrow's leaders.

For further information, or to send your resume, contact

First CRC,
PO Box 22039, 204 First Ave,
St. Thomas, ON N5R 6A1
firstcrcstthomas@canada.com

THE THREE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

OF THUNDER BAY, Bethlehem, Hope and First,

are looking for an ordained or unordained **YOUTH PASTOR** to oversee and direct youth ministry within the three churches. The Youth Pastor will work closely with existing youth ministry teams to coordinate and develop effective youth ministry in each congregation, and have personal contact with the youth of each church. Applicants should have a degree in youth ministry from a Reformed institution or equivalent experience within a Christian Reformed context. The Youth Pastor will be hired on a three year contract. A review will be conducted after the first year. Salary range: \$40 000 - \$45 000 with benefits. A job description will be made available to interested applicants, as well as profiles of the three churches upon request. If interested in this exciting and challenging positions, contact

Pastor Henry Vanderbeek at (807)939-1208
or **Brian Schenk at byschenk@tbaytel.net or (807) 344-5516.**

JOHN KNOX CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is a vibrant inter-denominational school serving the Christian community of **BRAMPTON**. We serve 330 students from Junior Kindergarten through Grade 8. We are looking for an **intermediate teacher** to cover a maternity leave position from January 2004 through to June 2004 with specialties in the areas of Science and French.

If you are interested in guiding students in understanding God's world through Science and His people through French, send your resume to boelens@bramptonjkcs.org or to:

Ed Boelens, John Knox Christian School
82 McLaughlin Rd S., Brampton, Ontario L6Y 2C7

For more information on our school visit our website at

www.bramptonjkcs.org

OTTAWA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is seeking qualified applicants for a definite opening for an **80% French position** in the primary grades. This is a maternity leave position that will commence on January 26, 2004. If you love Christ and his children, have an Ontario Teacher's Certificate, a Christian School Teacher's Certificate or their equivalents and are interested in being part of a dynamic and growing team of educators we look forward to hearing from you.

Please send your resume and a statement of faith to:

Paul Triemstra, Principal, Ottawa Christian School
2191 Benjamin Ave. Ottawa, Ontario K2A 1P6

BULKLEY VALLEY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, a school of 450 students located in the scenic Bulkley Valley of B.C., invites applications for a **principal** at its **elementary campus**, effective **August 1, 2004** (position involves approximately 50% teaching/ 50% administrative time). This campus has approximately 200 students from K-6. Bulkley Valley Christian is a school rooted in the reformed tradition, but contains a diverse denominational mix. Applications and inquiries for this position can be forwarded to:

Fred Reitsma, Education Committee Chairman
Bulkley Valley Christian School

P.O. Box 2117, Smithers, B.C. V0J 2N0

Ph: 250-847-9833 Fax: 250-847-0184

Email: bvcsel@telus.net

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bhofland@maple.ca or
Fax: 905-821-4822

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is \$7.50 per line, or \$1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion

- Dec 13** Musica Sacra Chorus presents "Glory to God" with director Johann Van Ittersum and accompanist Elise Vanderspek at Calvary Christian Reformed Church, **Flamborough**, 8 p.m. For info, call: Johann Van Ittersum at 519-863-6462. See ad this issue
- Dec 14** Concert of Sacred Music by **St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. Knox Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks St., **St. Thomas**. Freewill offering for Christmas Care & Salvation Army. For info: (519) 637-4357
- Dec 20** Musica Sacra Chorus presents "Glory to God" at Norwich United Church, **Norwich**, 8 p.m. Director Johann Van Ittersum and accompanist Elise Vanderspek. Call Johann Van Ittersum at 519-863-6462 for information.
- Dec 21** Heritage Christmas Service for Durham Region, Zion CRC, 409 Adelaide Ave. E., **Oshawa**, 3 p.m. Rev. J. Veenstra will preach in Dutch, "Hoe zal ik U ontvangen..?" Rev. D. Habermehl, organist. A social hour will follow the service.
- Jan 17** Concert of Sacred Music by **St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. Wallaceburg Christian Reformed Church, 150 Bruinsma Ave., Wallaceburg. Freewill offering for the Canadian Bible Society. (519)637-4357
- April 10** Annual Festival of Praise by the **Christian Male Chorus** Association of South Western Ontario. 7:30 p.m. Centennial Hall, 550 Wellington St. **London**. Five choirs with over 200 men participating. Ticket: \$13 (519)451-5484 or email: jettrickk@sympatico.ca For information: (519)637-4357.
- May 2** Concert of Sacred Music by **St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. Knox Presbyterian Church 55 Hincks St., **St. Thomas**. Free will offering for Canadian Bible Society. (519)637-4357
- Apr. 24** The MEN OF PRAISE (from Woodstock) in concert, at the Ebenezer CRC, **Jarvis** Ont., at 7:30 pm. Free will offering.



**HERITAGE
CHRISTMAS SERVICE**
for Durham Region,
Zion CRC, 409 Adelaide Ave. E.
Oshawa

December 21, 3 p.m.
Rev. J. Veenstra will preach in
Dutch
"Hoe zal ik U ontvangen..?"
Rev. D. Habermehl, organist.
A social hour will follow the
service.



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www.wellingtonstone.ca

"Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations"

- Psalm 90:1

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at the
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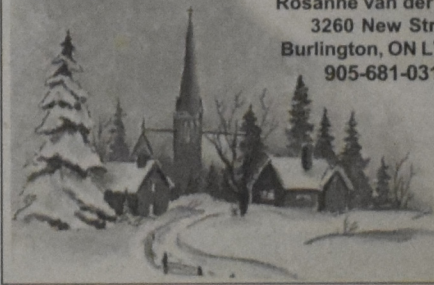
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Burlington, Ont.**
wishes you a
blessed and
beautiful Christmas

For more information
about Maranatha Homes
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3260 New Street
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News

Wanted to Purchase

Graduate student at the institute for Christian Studies seeks to purchase used Theology and Bible Studies books. Specifically looking for books by H. Bavinck, G.C. Berkouwer, and H. Dooyeweerd, and other Reformed thinkers.

Please contact Jason at 416-536-6644 or jpostma@icscanada.edu



And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth...

John 1:14a

May the reality of the Incarnation be the source of your celebration this Christmas!

SYL GEERITSMA

6 Beamer Ave.
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Burns Lake - CFLD	9:15 am	1400
Osoyoos - CJOR	8:00 am	1490
Penticton - CKOR	8:00 am	800
Port Alberni - CJAV	7:00 pm	1240
Prince George - CIRX	7:00 am	94.3
Princeton - CHOR	8:00 am	1400
Smithers - CFBV	9:15 am	1230
Summerland - CHOR	8:00 am	1450
Vernon - CJIB	9:30 pm	94

ALBERTA

Brooks - CIBQ	8:30 am	1340
Ft. McMurray - CJOK	8:30 am	1230
High River - CHRB	6:30 pm	1140
Edmonton - CJCA	6:00 pm	930
Westlock - CFOK	7:30 am	1370

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan - CJSL	8:00 am	1280
Weyburn - CFSL	8:00 am	1190

MANITOBA

Altona - CFAM	9:30 am	950
Steinbach - CHSM	9:30 am	1250
Winnipeg - CKJS	9:00 am	810

ONTARIO

Atikokan - CFAK	9:30 am	1240
Chatham - CFCO	6:30 am	630
Fort Frances - FM	7:30 am	93
Guelph - CJOY	8:30 am	1460
Hamilton - CHAM	7:30 am	820

Kapuskasing - CKAP	7:00 am	580
London - CKSL	7:00 am	1410
Oshawa - CKDO	8:00 am	1350
Owen Sound - CFOS	7:00 am	560
Pembroke - CHVR	10:00 am	96.7
Sarnia - CHOK	7:30 am	1070
Stratford - CJCS	8:45 am	1240
Windsor - CKLW	7:30 am	800
Wingham - CKNX	10:30 am	920

NEW BRUNSWICK

Saint John - CHSJ	9:00 am	94.1
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PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Charlottetown - CFCY	7:00 am	630
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NOVA SCOTIA

Bridgewater - CKBW	7:30 am	1000
Digby - CKDY	6:00 am	1420
Halifax - CFDR	8:30 am	780
Liverpool - CKBW	7:30 am	94.5
Kentville - CKEN	8:30 am	1490
Middleton - CKAD	8:30 am	1350
New Glasgow - CKEC	7:30 am	1320
Shelburne - CKBW	7:30 am	93.1
Sydney - CJCW	7:00 am	1270
Weymouth - CKDY	8:30 am	103.1
Windsor - CFAB	8:30 am	1450

TELEVISION -Primary Focus

ONTARIO - CTS Saturday - 7:30 pm

ALBERTA Lethbridge - CJIL Thurs. - 9:00 am Sat. - 2:00 am

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Nordegg AB - CHBW 8:30 am Sunday 93.9 FM
Rocky Mtn. House AB - CHBW 8:30 am Sun. 94.5 FM
Prince Rupert BC - CJRN 10 am Saturday 100.7 FM

Events/Advertising

Joy to the World The Lord is Come!

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:1

Christmas Greetings from
Holland Christian Home

7900 McLaughlin Rd. S. Brampton On

**These residents of Holland Christian Home offer their greetings for a
blessed and happy Christmas and New Year to family, friends, and neighbors.**

Annette Van Mansum	CT 408	Mrs. Agnes Talsma	HT 714
Tieny Den Otter	CT 501	Mrs. Elma Low	KT 1501
Rie & Dirk Jongkind	CT 601	Mrs. E. Van Hemert	KT 203
Berendina Eggengaar	CT 606	Mr. & Mrs. Marinus & Mien Staring	KT 806
Joanne & Harry Van Roon	CT 805	Mrs. Ann Van Harmelen	PT 1001
Rev. Rem & Janette Kooistra	CT 903	Mrs. Grace Mulder	PT 305
Jack & Minke de Leeuw	FM 110	Mrs. Wilma Bremer	PT 703
Truus Baker	HT 304	Arie & Magda VanZandwyk	PT 801
Aaltje Van Genderen	HT 307	Mrs. Betty Tigchelaar	T 405
Rennie Kamphuis Schroor	HT 312	Mrs. W. H. VanAlten	TT 106
Mr. & Mrs. William Braam	HT 315	Mr. & Mrs. Tom & Henny Ennema	TT 116
Johanna Beunk	HT 404	Mrs. Tine Van Houten	TT 214
John Veenstra	HT 410	Mr. & Mrs. Harry & Betty Roffel	TT 405
Jenny Hofstede	HT 412	Mrs. Betty Welmers	TT 406
Mrs. A. Keep	HT 502	Mr. & Mrs. Ann & Zwier Adriaanse	TT 407
Mrs. Jane VanderVeen	HT 509	Mr. & Mrs. Hank & Janny De Wolde	TT 408
Mrs. Grace Slikers	HT 512	Mr. & Mrs. Gina & Luke Moesker	TT 415
Mr. & Mrs. Peter & Jenny Hensen	HT 602	Mrs. Gail Zwier	TT 501
Mrs. Grace Meyer	HT 702	"Mrs. G. Kampuis, Parlevliet, Anna, Mary & Michelle"	TT 507
Mrs. C. Vander Woude	HT 705	Mr. & Mrs. Louw & Willy Van Marrum	TT 508
Truus deBruyn	HT 707	Mr. & Mrs. Clarence & Sya Dijkstra	TT 516, FM 221

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Visit our web site often for job updates www.hch.ca or email petedy@hch.ca

Consider moving into our new Nursing Home
opening in Summer 2003!

*May the peace of Christmas be yours
through the grace of Christ whose birth we celebrate*

The residents of Shalom Manor, a Christian Long Term Care Facility in Grimsby, Ontario, convey to their loved ones and friends, their best wishes in this Christmas Season and for the New Year 2004.

**You are my God, and I will give You thanks;
You are my God, and I will exalt You.
Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;
His love endures forever. Psalm 118: 28, 29.**

The following **Residents of Shalom Manor** have requested that their names be included
in the **2003 Christmas Greetings** edition of *Christian Courier*.

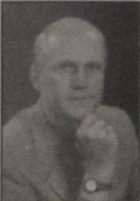
Mrs. Hilda van der Wier	Mr. Peter Hamming	Mr. Peter Vink	Mr. Ed & Mrs. Lucy Jorritsma
Mrs. Liesbeth Colenbrander	Mr. Jacob & Mrs. Renskje de Vries	Mr. Andries & Mrs. Maaikje Rijnberk	Mrs. Tina Buitenwerf
Mrs. Aaltje Jongejan	Mrs. Aleida Suesink	Mr. Clarence Rowaan	Mr. Herman Lenters
Mrs. Christine Sjaarda	Mr. Ben Hofland	Mrs. Anne Tigchelaar	Mrs. Fenna Hemrica
Mrs. Cornelia van Dyk	Mr. Gary Schipper	Mrs. Cornelia van der Steen	Mrs. Magda van Geest
Mrs. Janke (Jane) Soldaat	Mrs. Minnie Timmer	Mrs. Tine van der Veen	Mrs. Hendrika Bezuyen
Mrs. Anje Dreise	Mr. Dick Geerlof	Mr. Ysbr & van Keulen	Mrs. Trijntje de Witte
Mrs. Hilda Gerritsen	Mrs. Wilhelmina Dekker	Mr. Peter Ellens	Mrs. Maria van der Zwan
Mrs. Margaret Zantigh-Ouwehand	Mrs. Aafje de Raaf	Mrs. Helen (Sien) van der Meulen	Mr. Jacob Hoogerbrugge
Mrs. Pietje (Pat) Wybenga	Mr. Heine Sietsma	Mrs. Anne Veenstra	Mrs. Alice Elgersma
Mrs. Catrina Slagter	Mrs. Aukien Zeyl	Mrs. Trudy Visser	Mr. Johannes & Mrs. Maria Proper
Mrs. Pauline van der Kruk	Mrs. Theresa Guthrie	Mrs. Lois de Vries	Mr. Bastiaan & Mrs. Lyntje van Wingerden
Mrs. Jannie Kat	Mrs. Uilke de Vries	Mr. Arend & Mrs. Helen Lootsma	Mr. Cornelius & Mrs. Trudy Vandenberg
Mrs. Jurienna Hartman	Mrs. Martha van Leeuwen	Mrs. Margje Hagen	Mr. Jacob & Mrs. Neeftje (Nellie) van den Berg
Mrs. Meinsje Verwey	Mrs. Jacqueline Noordzij		

Greetings / Advertising

We wish God's blessing to all our friends and supporters through the holiday season and the coming year.


Merry Christmas!

From the National Board and Staff of the Christian Labour Association of Canada

Thanking all our friends and valued clients and wishing you God's blessing in the Christmas season and throughout the New Year.

Clarence Weima, CFP
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Senior Financial Consultant



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Greetings of the Season and Best wishes for the New Year



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From all of us:

**Wishing you a joyful Christmas season
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